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Comment

John Dewey Then and Now *John Dewey. An Intellectual Portrait* by Sidney Hook, which has recently been reissued by Prometheus Books, is an impressive work. It was written in 1939, when Hook, a young teacher of philosophy at New York University, was thirty-seven. The book is a remarkable exposition of Dewey's ideas and of the flaws in the history of philosophy before Dewey, especially in metaphysical theory.

Hook's sympathetic reading of Dewey's system makes clear the essentials of pragmatism. He points out the scientific basis of Dewey's philosophy, with its emphasis on systematic and logical inquiry, and its belief that the meaning and truth of ideas depends on their consequences in social life. Hook is especially sharp showing how Dewey's thinking escaped the dualism and transcendentalism of earlier philosophies, and he indicates how Dewey avoided the traps and blind alleys of earlier theories which could not provide the answers to many problems because they asked the wrong questions.

Hook is especially interesting in noting that Dewey was essentially an American thinker and one who reflected the ethos of scientific advance and of the restless curiosity of his time. Thus Hook remarked that Dewey, who had demonstrated that earlier philosophers echoed their times, also was responsive to his own period and social milieu. The question of relation to one's time is an important observation, for it not only involves Hook's relation to the thirties but the larger issue of Dewey's viability today. In fact, Richard Rorty, who wrote the introduction to the new edition of Hook's book, seems to assume that Dewey's views, and those of Hook, apply to the world today.

Actually, both Dewey and Hook, at least partly, were classic liberals in the thirties, especially in their social democratic leanings. Hook was just emerging from his Marxist phase, and that was evident in his strong interest in progressive reform, and in his concern with the democratization of art. Dewey's essential and classic liberalism also was expressed in his espousal of social reform. But Dewey's progressive liberalism was most apparent in his theories of education, which probably have constituted his greatest influence on social thought. And it was in this sphere that Dewey would be out of step today if he did not revise his educational theories.

It should be recalled that Dewey's radical proposals for education came as a reaction against the stodgy, genteel attitudes toward learning, and that Dewey was promoting a philosophy of education in keeping with the idea of meaningful learning as against outworn attitudes and values.

Today, it must be emphasized, the situation is reversed. The schools

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have been taken over by a contempt for traditional knowledge and by an addiction to trendy notions and values. And liberalism, which has occasionally leaned toward the left, has been even more strongly radicalized, and is not the liberalism of Dewey's day. Despite Rorty's cheerful attempt to preserve Hook's earlier thinking, in the last years of his life Hook was anything but a confirmed Deweyan in education. And in the light of Dewey's rugged skepticism and pragmatic sense of reality, it would seem very unlikely that Dewey, were he alive today, would be supporting the current modish educational notions.

As to the viability of pragmatism as a whole, there are questions. It does not appear that Dewey's scientific method of inquiry applies to politics and aesthetics, as both Dewey and Hook claimed. Hook was especially weak in his exegesis of the Deweyan approach to problems of art, which Hook looked at as a democratic activity. Both Dewey and Hook were so immersed in the social aspects of democracy that they failed to understand that intellectual questions are resolved and judgments in the arts are made by professionals in the various areas.

But Hook's early book will do much to resuscitate his own reputation as a philosophic thinker – and not only as a political activist.

W. P.

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DIANA TRILLING

Goronwy – and Others: A Remembrance of England

When late in 1979 the news reached me that Goronwy Rees had died in London, I had not seen him for a long time, more than six years, other than for the two or three hours we had spent together on his visit to America four years earlier, shortly before my husband died, nor had he and I, or he and Lionel, been in correspondence since we had last been in England six years earlier. On the occasion of his brief stop-over in New York – he was here for only a weekend – the two of us, Goronwy and I, met for a quiet lunch, after which he came to our apartment to make his farewell to Lionel. Lionel died not many days later and in a forthcoming issue of *Encounter* magazine, the distinguished Anglo-American journal to which Goronwy contributed a monthly column, he published a moving memorial to his American friend.

There was of course no reason for Goronwy's not having simply explained to me why he was in New York for only so short a time when he at last – at long last – got to this country and why his stay in New York followed a similarly brief visit to San Francisco. His daughter, Jenny Rees, has now published in England a biography of her father, *Looking for Mr. Nobody,* and from her careful reconstruction of his movements I learn that in 1975 Goronwy visited the United States, also Canada and Australia, as part of a quick overview of the Dalgety Enterprises about which he had been commissioned to write a book. He hurried the visit because his wife Margie was now gravely ill and he wanted to get back to her as fast as possible.

But why did he himself not make this explanation to me? The answer, I fear, is all too obvious. Secrecy was Goronwy's habit and nourishment. Like a familiar perfume, it announced and trailed him. In Jenny Rees's memory of her family, mystery had always pervaded the Rees household. In fact, it was in order to discover what her parents hid from their children and from the world – it was a Secret so portentous that it is regularly capitalized in her book – that she undertook her research into her father's life.

From the start of our acquaintance with Margie and Goronwy, I had the sense, not of Goronwy alone but of the pair of them, that there was something they withheld from us, an aspect of their thought or experience which, though it undoubtedly had its original reference to

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Goronwy rather than Margie, had come to color not only his state of being but hers as well. While one would not have thought to describe Goronwy as a silent person, he seemed always to be on guard in conversation. He was the author of several volumes of memoirs, yet he employed the medium more for the statement of ideas or, as in the case of *A Chapter of Accidents,* to correct the troubling historical record than for self-exploration. Even his column for *Encounter* was signed with only the initial "R," as if, by keeping the whole of his name from view, he was himself shielded. And indeed this was in some part the case. In America, even regular readers of *Encounter* were little aware of him as a figure in the literary life of our time and as for his reputation in England – well, in England he was always recognized less for his critical accomplishment than for his association with the notorious Cambridge spies, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Kim Philby and Anthony Blunt, in particular his long-time friend Guy Burgess.

Goronwy was himself not a Cambridge man nor was he, like Burgess and Burgess's co-conspirators, a product of the British public schools. He was Welsh, the son of a well-known theologian, and had attended a grammar school in Cardiff. His university was "the other place," Oxford, which he attended on scholarship. Oxford had also been his father's university. At Oxford he took a First and on graduation won a much-coveted junior fellowship at All Souls. But the academic promise he had shown as a student was not to be realized: he gave up his All Souls fellowship to travel on the Continent and try his hand at fiction. Although he published several novels, he was never successful as a fiction writer. On his return to England, until he joined the army in the late summer of 1939, he earned a precarious living in various branches of the higher journalism. Early in the war, he met and married Margie with whom he fathered a family of five children. In the early Fifties, he returned to Oxford as Estates Bursar at All Souls, a position from which he was recalled to his native Wales to become Principal of University College at Aberystwyth.

It was while Rees was in his Aberystwyth post that he effectively ruined his career. Whether because he was in need of money – he usually was – or because he was driven for patriotic reason to alert Britain to the presence of Soviet spies at high levels of British government, he published a series of articles in which he revealed the traitorous activities of Guy Burgess. He had been an intimate of Burgess for many years, ever since they had come to know each other while Burgess was still a Cambridge undergraduate and Goronwy had just taken up his fellowship at All Souls. Whatever his motive in making the disclosure, he could not

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have chosen a less fortunate vehicle for it. His series of six articles appeared in a popular British weekly, *People*. They were unsigned but their author was immediately recognized. By now Burgess's involvement in Soviet espionage was of course widely known: it was five years since, together with Donald Maclean, he had fled the country. Actually, only a short time before the appearance of Rees's series, he had surfaced in a television interview in Moscow. The punishment meted out to Rees for his revelations about his friend was nevertheless prompt, cruel and lasting. He was forced to resign his position at Aberystwyth. More, he was permanently ostracized by his old acquaintances at Oxford and by the British intellectual establishment. As late as 1964, when Lionel and I came to Oxford for Lionel to take up his year's appointment as Eastman Professor, Goronwy was still "received" at his old university by only two friends from the past, John Sparrow, then head of All Souls, and the renowned intellectual historian, Sir Isaiah Berlin.

It is plain that E. M. Forster was not alone among the educated British in believing that as between betraying one's country and betraying a friend, it was far preferable to betray one's country. In response to Rees's exposure of the already self-exposed Burgess, the noted Oxford classicist Maurice Bowra proposed that a stand of Judas trees be planted in Rees's name. No one proposed that the traitorous Guy Burgess be similarly dishonored.

Maurice Bowra was homosexual, as was Guy Burgess. On his first meeting with Goronwy, Burgess had made a homosexual advance which Goronwy pleasantly rejected – even at this early age, Goronwy was already an accomplished womanizer (that lovely English word). E. M. Forster, too, was homosexual and there is small doubt but that there was an element of sexual kinship in the unwillingness of so many of Burgess's associates to be troubled by his treason: Goronwy's exposure of Burgess bore all too closely upon Britain's homosexual community. The Cambridge spy ring had come into existence in the Thirties when in Britain, as in America, the economic depression was at its height and when Communism on the Soviet model was being embraced by many of its best-educated and idealistic young people as the sole remedy for the glaring failures of capitalism. It was also a period in which homosexuality, widespread though it might be in practice, was harshly condemned in British social custom and law. The left-wing British homosexual could well feel that his sexual preference made him an alien in his own country and that to betray Britain to the Soviet Union, far from being an act of treason, was an act of hope.

In the years of our friendship with the Reeses – they extended from

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1964 until 1973, when we were last in England – neither Margie nor Goronwy ever spoke of Guy Burgess to us or alluded to the Aberystwyth incident. Other than to speak of the Hiss-Chambers case, a subject to which Goronwy recurred with some persistence, we indeed spoke very little of politics. I nonetheless assumed – and I am sure that Lionel did, too – that politics were not only important to Goronwy but the ground in which was planted at least one root of his romantic adventurousness. I recall, for instance, that after one of his inquiries about Chambers, I proposed to Lionel, and not in entire frivolity, that perhaps Goronwy had himself once been a spy.

What we did speak about with the Reeses now escapes me. What, after all, does one talk about as one moves from acquaintance to friendship with someone one has newly met? What is it that initiates or bolsters the relationship, separating it from the more ordinary of one's social encounters, those which make up the everyday content of our lives but fail to give them their substance or shine?

Eventually, someone other than Goronwy or Margie did tell us of the Aberystwyth publication. This could not but have happened since every knowledgeable Briton knew about it. It would turn out, however, that this was not the Secret which inspired Goronwy's daughter to launch her researches. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the files of Soviet Intelligence were slowly becoming accessible to foreign scholars and in 1993 a respected British historian of espionage, John Costello, writing in collaboration with Oleg Tsarev, a former Colonel in the KGB who had become Historical Consultant to the new Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, published a volume called *Deadly Illusions* which disclosed that Goronwy, once so much at pains to publicize the treason of others, had himself been a Soviet agent. In studying her father's life, it was the truth or untruth of this charge that Jenny set out to investigate. If true, this was the upper-case Secret, the mystery of mysteries, which had shadowed the Rees household.

We were introduced to Goronwy by Fred Warburg of the English publishing firm of Secker & Warburg. Fred had for some time been Lionel's British publisher and he was about to become mine as well. In literary circles in New York he was chiefly known as the publisher and friend of George Orwell. While this gave him literary distinction, it also brought him political distrust: left-wing intellectuals have never been able to comprehend how anyone with Orwell's supposedly liberal principles could also be so firm and vocal an anti-Communist. To most people this

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obviously meant that in making the claim to liberalism Orwell was sailing under false colors.

Warburg frequently came to New York on book-buying trips and sometimes Lionel and I had had a drink or dinner with him. He was a tall, handsome man with a long, narrow face, olive-skinned, with bold aquiline features. His tailoring was almost too impeccable; in a careless world it drew attention to itself. What I was particularly impressed by in him was his air of good breeding, as it would once have been called; everything about him, not only the way he dressed but the way he sat or walked, the way he handled himself in conversation, was testimony to his unimpeachable upbringing. Late in life, he would publish an autobiography, *A Gentleman's Profession*. Its title was embarrassingly appropriate: Fred was nothing if not a gentleman-publisher. Plainly, his marriage to the obstreperous Pamela was his single bid for freedom from the rigid rules of behavior in which he had been reared and in which he was otherwise still bound.

Until our invitation to dinner at Fred's flat in London, neither Lionel nor I had met his French-born wife, Pamela de Bayou, as she was known in the offices of Secker & Warburg where, though her name didn't appear as a member of the firm, she exerted a considerable influence in its operations. There was no trace of foreign accent in Pamela's speech, and if it weren't for her French name, one would not easily have guessed her birth. It was also difficult to determine her age; her air of shrewdness made her seem older than she probably was. While she was not in any conventional sense pretty, she had the assurance of a woman accustomed to the attention of men. That Fred doted on her was not to be missed though in her company he was measurably less a person than when we had met him alone. She was his challenge to decorum but the thief of his authority.

One hadn't to be in Pamela's company for long to become aware of the pleasure she took in outraging the proprieties. Not long ago I spoke of her to a friend in America who had been one of Fred's early authors. "Pamela de Bayou," he chuckled. "What a terror! I remember the first time I met her. The three of us were having dinner together and she opened the conversation by saying that she had had an awful day. She had lost her tampon. Inside her. She screamed this unlikely story so loudly that everyone in the restaurant was looking at her!"

We were staying in a hotel in London's West End and took a cab to the Warburgs'. They lived on a modest street a short distance beyond Regents Park in a building some six or eight storeys tall. The dull, unbroken façade which their apartment house presented to the street

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labeled it "modern," in the style which in the Sixties had begun to replace the traditional architecture of London. The Warburgs lived on an upper floor and to reach their flat we had to entrust ourselves to a lift so tiny that we felt that we were being propelled skyward in a coffin.

It was a small party they had put together for us, two other couples in addition to them and ourselves: Goronwy and Margie Rees and the playwright John Osborne and his then wife Penelope Gilliatt. In the interval before the other guests gathered, the Warburgs proudly took us out on the strip of balcony which bordered their sitting-room – one looked down on a dim spread of scrubby field, dotted here and there with a low-lying house and a scattering of trees. Awaiting the other guests I sipped my pre-dinner sherry and pondered the width of ocean that separated the publishing life of England from that of the United States. Where, I wondered, was an American publisher who would be as content as Warburg with his small show of worldly success: his three-room apartment and his scrap of a view?

I had not been in England since early childhood and I was being regularly surprised in my first confrontation with the differences between our two countries. We shared a language and a substantial portion of our cultural heritage, but then what? Lionel and I could not have been more cordially welcomed than by the people we were meeting, yet strange barriers rose between us which didn't have to be perceived as in any way hostile for us to experience them as divisions to be noted, and a chasm bridged. Later, after living in Oxford for several months, Lionel and I would go on holiday to France or Holland or Italy: we would find it strange that in these other countries we were more at home than with our new British acquaintances. Long ago, H. G. Wells had mocked the idea of national traits, dismissing them as governess talk, the unexamined formulations of the nursery, but how, other than as tokens of national character, was one to explain the reiterated appearance of patterns of speech and conduct so distinct from our own, the prevailing taste, for instance, for self-dramatization which seemed to impel the British, even in their most commonplace occupations, choosing, say, a tomato at the greengrocer's or cashing a check at the local bank, to wring the last bit of theater from these prosaic routines or, at another and more troubling extreme of social habit, the readiness of the English to forget their still-recent war and forgive the enemy, as if the contest had indeed been only a game and their bombed-out city its playing field? In 1964 a mere twenty years had elapsed since Hitler's defeat. The scars which the blitz had left upon London were still visible. The fact that flowers bloomed in the craters which still marred some of the less prominent streets of London didn't camouflage their wartime origin. Yet we heard no men-

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tion of the war from anyone in England and it would constitute for Lionel and me a vitalizing return to reality to visit in Amsterdam and be at once taken to the home of Anne Frank and to the synagogue which, whatever the intent of the Nazis, still so solidly stood its ground.

The Warburgs' dinner wasn't the most stirring entertainment one might have anticipated. Ironically, for this occasion it was the French-born Pamela who produced what little drama the evening offered. "The English are the dirtiest people in the world," she proclaimed as we gathered at the table. She looked around at her guests invitingly, soliciting contradiction. As a shocker, it was a distant second to her lost tampon. No one ventured a reply. The remark lay on the table like a flattened balloon.

The Osbornes were not really aloof from the rest of us but they were quiet guests. They did their conversational duty but it was clear that they were not eager celebrants of the occasion. It struck me that they were perhaps disappointed in the company which the Warburgs had provided for them and were sitting out the time until they could go elsewhere more to their taste.

While the Reeses were quiet as well, they managed to communicate even more than that they were enjoying the evening: a flattering deference to the company in which they found themselves. There was a grace in their social behavior which, together with the straightforward intelligence in everything they said, made me hope that our introduction was a prelude to further acquaintance.

Initially, I was more drawn to Margie than to Goronwy Rees but this soon altered as I grew to like them equally. Margie Rees had surely been a very pretty girl. Even now, in her mid-forties, she was effortlessly appealing. She had a small, mobile face with regular features and a quick generous smile, and she moved with an unconscious grace. I especially liked her manner of speech, her gently-chiding voice. In her speech there was a colloquialism not of her own time, more of the Twenties than the Thirties or Forties. In America it would have been realized that she had first appeared in the pages of F. Scott Fitzgerald. As I came to know her better, I would often think how lucky Fitzgerald would have been if, in what we like to call "real life," he had had Goronwy's Margie as his wife instead of his unfortunate Zelda.

Goronwy Rees was probably the most attractive man I have ever met – I soon learned that a crowded calendar of sexual conquests attested to his power with women. At the time we met, he was already in his mid-fifties but he was still slim and lithe, quick-moving. His face was at once boyish and, like that of the poet Auden, deeply furrowed by experience. I forget the color of his eyes but not their probing inquisitive-

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ness. It would always be a question whether what he was searching out was one's good will or its opposite, one's suspiciousness and doubt of him. His smile was frequent and brilliant but ultimately lacking in mirth. I do not mean that it was a mechanical smile, a mere twitch of the lips. It was full and pleasing, dangerously so. But it was gone as fast as it had appeared, like a curtain which rises for an instant to reveal a scene of joy, only in the next instant to fall abruptly, robbing us of our happy illusion.

I remember little of our talk this first night of our meeting with the Reeses, not much else than Lionel's and my antiphonal account of the curious occurrence in our taxi as we had been driving to the Warburgs' earlier that evening. Our cab had been halted by a traffic light and another cab had drawn up alongside of us. It appeared to be driven by a friend of our driver; the two men greeted each other familiarly and our driver called out: "the Warburgs." To this mention of our destination the other driver nodded appreciatively. What Lionel and I couldn't understand was how our driver knew whom we were visiting. Giving him the address to which we wished to be taken, Lionel had mentioned only a street and number, not a name; and even if he overheard us speaking of the Warburgs, why did our driver want to share this information with his friend?

Pamela supplied the answer. We had undoubtedly been driven by the same cabbie who, with her encouragement, had submitted a novel to her. It was a promising subject for a work of fiction, was it not? Pamela inquired brightly of us. Life as seen through the eyes of a London cab driver? But the manuscript had now been submitted and she would have to write him a note of rejection. She would give the disappointed author the name of a rival publishing house to which he could send his book, she concluded naughtily.

Throughout her explanation Warburg regarded his wife with unwavering admiration and when, some months later, Goronwy would tell me of his old affair with Pamela, I would retrieve, as from a computer, this expression on Warburg's face, this declaration of his unfaltering love. Why, I asked myself then and still ask, why an affair with Pamela of all people, and why had Goronwy made this intimate disclosure to me? "She had the softest skin of any woman I have ever known," he assured me in response to my unasked question and added, unnecessarily: "All over." Boo! I replied silently. The discovery of his wife's infidelity, Goronwy told me, had all but destroyed the Warburgs' marriage and Fred's life. Broken-hearted, he had packed to leave but Pamela had managed to hold him back. The affair had ended and she and Fred had once more become their old devoted selves.

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Together, there was now no hint of constraint between Fred and Goronwy, nor any visible flutter of excitement on Pamela's side beyond the stir which, I was already gathering, she always created around her. And Margie? What about Margie? Dear gentle Margie would seem to be well-practiced in the art of sustaining her marriage, keeping its surface unmarred, its depths unroiled.

We didn't again see the Reeses with the Warburgs but in the next months we often came down to London from Oxford and now and then met Fred and Pamela for lunch or a drink. On one such visit, the Warburgs took us to lunch at the Athenaeum, Fred's club in London. It may no longer be so but at the time the Athenaeum didn't permit women in its main dining room; women had to be entertained in the adjacent Annex. Whether it was Fred or Pamela who chose it as our place to meet for lunch, Pamela had of course to have approved it. Had she chosen it just because it would allow her to make a fuss?

"Isn't this ridiculous?" she shrilled from the top of the flight of stairs leading from the door of the Annex to the crowded room in which members dined with their female guests and where Fred and Lionel and I were waiting for her. "Do we women have to put up with this?" In 1964 Pamela's feminist fervor was precocious; women's liberation had just begun to make itself known in England. She meant to provoke whoever heard her in the room at the foot of the stairs and several of the people in the large dining area did in fact look up questioningly. But no one gave any sign of disturbance. As for Fred, as always Fred beamed. Another time when we came to London from Oxford and saw the Warburgs, I heard Pamela tell a captive audience that she had once sat next to Thomas Mann at table and that the famous German author had spent most of the meal with his hand up her skirt.

In the few weeks remaining before we moved from London to Oxford, we saw the Reeses several times, either in their casual comfortable home or at the Old St. James's House, the hotel in London's West End to which we had been recommended by friends in New York. Sadly, I learn that it no longer exists. The Reeses were charmed by the Old St. James's House. They especially responded to something disreputable about it, or not so much disreputable as illicit. Neither of them had heard of our hotel before we asked them to meet us there one late afternoon for a drink.

The Old St. James's House was a group of four-storey brownstones – or it may have been redstones – thrown together at the end of a small dead-end street off St. James's Street and it didn't at all look like a ho-

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tel. I assume that all the guests occupied suites, as we did. Ours was a suite on the ground floor and it consisted of a large bedroom, a bath, and a good-sized sitting-room, furnished with sofa, easy chairs, tables, and a giant sideboard equipped with an imposing array of glassware, whiskey glasses, sherry glasses, wine glasses, brandy glasses, champagne glasses. Although the sideboard could supply neither plates nor cutlery, the hotel offered a limited range of food which was served at any hour of the day or night. Yet there was no sign of hotel staff other than the chambermaid who tidied for us each morning and then disappeared and a towering male porter on twenty-four-hour duty, a great hulk of a man who filled the cage-like office in the lobby near the hotel's front door. At night, still in his dowdy uniform, his jacket unbuttoned at the throat, he slept on the office floor. The door of the hotel was locked at ten each evening; if we returned at a later hour than this, the porter would rouse himself and ill-naturedly let us in. There were times when as many as three Rolls Royces were lined up at the curb, none with a chauffeur. Their owners had no doubt come in from the country for a day of innocent errands in London but there were other enticing possibilities to account for their presence.

Over the next months, my hope that we would become friends with the Reeses was steadily realized. Or was it? We did indeed see Margie and Goronwy more frequently than anyone else we knew in London or Oxford but today, as I look back upon the relationship, the never-to-be-answered question recurs to me, whether friendship is ever really possible where people are not joined by a common past. Were we ever friends, I wonder now, with any of the people who comprised our social circle in England or did they simply represent for us a series of pleasant ports of call on our journey away from home, while we represented for them no more than a temporary change in their social landscape, new faces at the old table? I come even to question whether one can ever go beyond congeniality with people of a country other than one's own. Where people haven't grown up together, the newcomer hasn't an assigned place in the social scheme of things. The loyalty among friends which is so much prized by the British has been built over the centuries, brick by precious social brick. It is their most personal and particular expression of class solidarity.

No doubt because of his Welsh background, Goronwy seems to have been more aware than most of the stratifications of class in the England of his time. He addresses this in the early pages of *A Chapter of Accidents,* the memoir he published in 1972 in which he recalls his Oxford experience and his loneliness and sense of apartness from the other

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students. One evening, he tells us, he was invited to play bridge by some neighbors in his hall. "Very early in the evening," he writes, "I realized that they had so much in common in the way of social background, education, mutual friends and shared experiences that they were able to talk in a kind of conversational shorthand in which a large part of their meaning was unspoken and suppressed. . . . Later, I learned to recognize this . . . as a rather topsy-turvy kind of politeness, which assumes that whatever is known to themselves is known equally to all and has no need of explanation."

How much the disapprobation which later in life would be directed to Rees because of the Aberystwyth incident was due to the fact that he was an outsider, not native to the privileges he acquired through his Oxford education, is difficult for an American to determine with certainty. It may be that Americans are abnormally sensitive to the class structure of British society, but I suspect that his treatment would have been measurably less harsh had Goronwy been writing from within rather than from outside the magic circle of authenticated birth. To this day, I note a discomforting social awareness in virtually any public mention of him. As late as 1994, the British reviewer of Jenny Rees's biography of her father in the *Times Literary Supplement* found it important to record that Rees was "the first state-educated Welshman to be elected to All Souls."

Goronwy's mother died just as he was graduating from Oxford; her loss considerably reduced the pleasure he would otherwise have taken in his First. He writes about her with much affection in *A Chapter of Accidents,* fondly recalling her domestic dutifulness and her missionary devotion to her community. Somewhat more moderately, he also reports his love and respect for his theologian father. Oxford had been the elder Rees's university, too, but no one could have made less claim to the place or been less claimed by it – so far as Goronwy's father can be said to have been shaped by Oxford, he might have taken his degree by correspondence. Back in Wales, he became one of its outstanding churchmen, a passionate preacher, first in Aberystwyth, then in Cardiff, greatly concerned with the working lives of the Welsh miners. From his father Goronwy had his early training in the progressive politics which he took with him to Oxford and which, through most of the Thirties, announced itself in his commitment to Marxism.

At Oxford, surrounded as he was by the privileged youth of England, Goronwy never ceased to yearn for the simplicity and warmth of his boyhood home, the quiet evenings in his Cardiff parlor, alone with his parents at their books. Inevitably, he took with him into

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adulthood the lesson of his parents' high-mindedness and their sense of social responsibility. For the whole of his life, this man who would be so widely scorned for his Aberystwyth publication carried within him, whether he was pursuing the parental instruction or seeming to do violence to it, the heavy legacy of parental principle. Even where he plainly flouted the stern "Calvinistic Methodism" (as Jenny calls it) of his upbringing, it continued to make the armature of his moral being.

But I stop myself. This is my view of Goronwy. It is not the view of others who knew him.

I had to sit at the side of Margie Rees as she maneuvered her car on the hazardous highway between Oxford and London in order to have a first intimation of her practical competence and, just so, I had to learn a great deal more about her than was to be gathered from a casual first meeting – indeed, I had finally to see her from the vantage of my present-day knowledge of Goronwy's difficult life – to have some measure of her bravery and dedication as his enduring partner. Today, I think of Margie as no less than a domestic heroine, making her decent home and raising her five children on what was always so insufficient and undependable an income; coping with her husband's infidelities, whatever their extent and however much she came to hear of them; most daunting of demands upon her courage and resilience, managing as she did the consequences of the Aberystwyth incident and Goronwy's tangled relationship with Guy Burgess. If the miracle of Goronwy Rees lay in his having recognized Margie's quality and chosen her as his wife, the miracle of Margie Rees was the grace she brought to her life with a husband who became virtually an official object of public condemnation, someone from whom the people they met at dinner parties drew back their moral skirts.

Margie knew nothing of self-pity. Her gallantry declared itself only as good manners. Her valiant nature served her well: as far back as when we first met, she was already battling the cancer from which she eventually died. This no doubt made for the note of wry fatality which one soon discerned at the edge of her quiet liveliness. I'm sure she died bravely. She died in the summer of 1976, not long after Lionel died. We last saw her in the late spring of 1973. This final time that we were together, she gave me a gift of two little blue and white porcelain fish which I keep on my desk. My hand rests on them now as I write of her.

Gossip is everywhere its own sweet pastime. Although we heard only so minimally of the Aberystwyth scandal, we had been living in Oxford no more than a few months when we learned – I don't now remember

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from whom – of Goronwy's famous affair with Rosamond Lehmann. Where Goronwy's affair with Pamela Warburg was of relatively recent vintage, the affair with Lehmann was the well-advertised adventure of his youth – it dated from before his marriage. In this affair it was only Lehmann, eight years Goronwy's senior and already married, who was adulterous. Yet as the story was recounted to us, Goronwy was made to seem, even at this early stage of his career, a practiced and conscienceless seducer.

When Goronwy and Rosamond Lehmann met, Lehmann had already published an unusually successful first novel, *Dusty Answer*. She was also a widely-acclaimed beauty. Indeed, I remember from my own young womanhood my admiration for her photograph on the cover of that book, the tranquil, unsmiling face (as I then saw it), with its wide, calm brow; the patrician poise of the head; the finely-chiseled cheeks and chin and the delicately-lined mouth. Today, I leaf through an improbable English publication, *Rosamond Lehmann's Album,* a pictorial survey of her life, and I not only marvel that such a volume should have been commercially published but I am stupefied that I once thought this image a model of female loveliness. Did the young women of my generation really envy a beauty this blank, this lacking in spirit? Somewhere, wherever it is that people live their lives of feeling, the woman in these photographs had to have been out of reach, or not worth reaching for.

It had been a legendary encounter, the meeting of Lehmann and Rees, and it was reported to me in sunlit detail. On a fine summer afternoon they had both of them been guests at Bowen's Court, the home in Ireland of the novelist Elizabeth Bowen. Rosamond Lehmann was chatting with others of the company in Bowen's sitting-room when the garden doors opened and in came Goronwy. He was barefoot – so went the reverential account – and wore light linen trousers. The sleeves of his shirt were rolled to the elbow and the shirt was Byronically open at the throat. A soft curl of hair fell carelessly over his forehead. Across the sitting-room floor, the beautiful young Rosamond and the beautiful younger Goronwy looked into each other's eyes and fell in love. It was in Rosamond's, not Elizabeth's, bed that Goronwy spent that night – or have I neglected to mention that, according to my informant, Goronwy was Bowen's lover at this time? The walls of the house were not sufficiently solid to keep this hidden from their hostess. There was left to Bowen only such solace as she might one day find in recreating Rees – so it is said – in the character of the repugnant Eddie in her best-known work of fiction, *The Death of the Heart*.

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Many years have now passed since I first read this work of Elizabeth Bowen's and on the earlier reading I seem wholly to have missed what now strikes me as its most salient but least attractive feature, its author's bald assumption of the natural superiority of her class. Nowhere does the book challenge Bowen's right, conferred upon her by her own elevated social location, to pass condescending and even dismissive judgment upon those of her characters who happen to be less fortunately situated in the world than herself. The book is undeniably gifted. Few novelists since Dickens have matched Bowen's ability to capture atmosphere – I still feel in my nostrils the wet salt air which blows in from the ocean at the seaside resort where much of her narrative unfolds. And although her Portia, the book's sixteen-year-old protagonist, is much too "fine" for my taste or credence, Bowen's portrayal of the other adolescents in her story is unerringly skillful.

Today, I find it highly unconvincing that Bowen's Eddie is in any sense a portrait of the youthful Goronwy Rees. Bowen was a mature woman, ten years his senior, when she knew Goronwy – he apparently had a penchant for women older than himself. It is unimaginable to me that she would have taken an Eddie, so callow and small-minded, into her home and life. While it may be that at twenty-three, Eddie's age in the novel, Goronwy was in fact a seducer and even a scamp, we know that he was also a developed intelligence, the winner of a First at Oxford and of a highly-valued junior fellowship at All Souls. His youthful distinction of mind is surely not to be confused with the cheap cleverness of an Eddie. We may easily understand that Goronwy at twenty-three would have been attracted to a mature distinguished woman like Bowen, but it defies good sense to suppose that he would have amused himself, as Eddie does, with the love of a child. Bowen's Portia is not an intellectual prodigy, far from it, nor is she a sexual prodigy, a Lolita. She is not presented to us by her author as at all a perverse sexual preference of Eddie's. She is Bowen's notion of virtuous girlhood.

Elizabeth Bowen was living in Oxford during our first year there and we were often at the same Oxford functions. She was an imposing presence in the University community. It was forbidden to smoke at High Table in the Oxford colleges; Bowen alone violated this rule. No one dared to intervene. I watched her light up between courses at dinner at Magdalen; anxious but wordless, the Principal fetched her an ashtray. I was myself then still a compulsive smoker and I envied Bowen her boldness and wished that I could command the deference which she could rely upon. It was difficult for me to associate someone of her weightiness with the roguish boy lover, Eddie.

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As I think of this strange trio, Bowen, Lehmann and the youthful Goronwy, my mind returns to silly, noisy Pamela de Bayou, who never achieved the worthy place in English life accorded to these other celebrated women. John Costello, historian of Soviet espionage in Britain, apparently never thought to interview Fred Warburg's wife about her possible acquaintance among the English spies, but we can feel fairly certain that, if he had, she would never have been tempted, like Rosamond Lehmann, to denounce Rees as a liar. She was not moved, like Bowen, to avenge herself upon her former lover and leave us so reductive a portrait of him. Pamela might say whatever came into her foolish head about anyone or anything but never, so far as I know, did she speak at all of Goronwy. On his behalf she practiced an unaccustomed discretion. Once their affair had ended, she maintained an amiable acquaintanceship with her old lover. Hers was a living heart.

There is nothing of this, nothing of Pamela Warburg or Elizabeth Bowen, no mention of Rosamond Lehmann, though the path of her life certainly at many points crossed that of Guy Burgess, in Goronwy's *A Chapter of Accidents*. His memoir is not so much a backward glance over the whole range of his personal and professional experience as a careful recreation of his central drama, his relationship with Burgess. What usually most engages us in autobiography are its opening pages where the author returns to his early years and shares with us his first knowledge of the universe into which he was so fatedly delivered, but though Goronwy's volume deals in adequate detail with his boyhood in Wales and his undergraduate years at Oxford, these are not the heart of the autobiographical matter.

The purpose of *A Chapter of Accidents* is obvious: it provides Rees with the opportunity to tell his side of the famous Aberystwyth story, beginning with the history of his friendship with Burgess and culminating in his exposure of his friend's activity as a Communist agent. As it works out, the early sections of the book constitute a kind of character reference for the man who made so disastrous a choice as Goronwy's at Aberystwyth. They assure the reader that this person whom the world has accused of lies and disloyalty is by birth and upbringing well-certified for honor and good faith.

Goronwy and Burgess first met in Oxford as guests of Felix Frankfurter, the future Supreme Court Justice who at the time was an American visiting professor at the University. That the two brilliant young men were at once drawn to each other cannot surprise us.

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Burgess promptly made a homosexual advance to Goronwy; it was declined. Burgess was untroubled by the refusal. They shared a youthful idealism which expressed itself in their left-wing politics. At Cambridge, Burgess was a ripening revolutionary; Goronwy had brought with him to Oxford his father's socialist preference. In the next few years their paths diverged: Goronwy was travelling on the Continent, writing fiction. But in the mid-Thirties they found themselves living near each other in London and fell to drinking together at the same pub or spending their evenings together at Burgess's flat on Bentinck Street.

Burgess's Bentinck Street dwelling is now famous in London's social history. By all report, it was a sordid affair. Burgess drank inordinately and lived in filth. He apparently subsisted on a diet of dried fish and garlic; unrefrigerated, this smelly mash sat on one of his windowsills. Yet such was his power of mind and personality that he had no difficulty in bringing the world to his door, the luminaries of English society no less than a range of unsavory characters who were present either as an aid in his undercover political activities or in response to his indiscriminate sexual appetite. Some years later, Malcolm Muggeridge, that most finicky of observers, would describe the scene:

> There we found . . . a whole revolutionary *Who's Who*. It was the only time I ever met Burgess; and he gave me a feeling such as I have never had from anyone else, of being morally afflicted in some way. His very physical presence was, to me, malodorous and sinister. . . . There was not so much a conspiracy gathered round him as just decay and dissolution. It was the end of a class, of a way of life; something that would be written about in history books, like Gibbon on Heliogabalus with wonder and perhaps hilarity, but still tinged with sadness, as all endings are.

According to *A Chapter of Accidents,* it was on an evening in 1936 that Guy Burgess abruptly revealed to Goronwy that he had been a Comintern agent ever since he had come down from Cambridge. He proposed that Goronwy become his fellow-conspirator. Goronwy tells us that he declined the invitation. In this conversation, as a final seductive stroke, Burgess identified for Goronwy one of his, Burgess's, most illustrious partners in espionage: swearing Goronwy to solemnest secrecy, he told him that Anthony Blunt, who was already in 1936 highly regarded as an art historian and critic, was also a Communist agent. It could be that Burgess was very drunk when he made this dangerous disclosure. But more likely he was employing the mention of Blunt as his trump card in

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the attempt to entice Rees into his spy ring. If someone as respectable and respected as Blunt could spy for the Soviet Union, why should Goronwy hesitate?

Blunt is not identified as this co-conspirator in Goronwy's memoir; no name is supplied for Burgess's partner in spying. Apparently, even as late as 1972, when *A Chapter of Accidents* was published, Goronwy was still intent upon keeping his old promise not to reveal Blunt's part in the Cambridge spy ring. (Actually, however, he had broken this vow almost immediately he had made it by repeating Burgess's revelation to Rosamond Lehmann, who was then his lover.) But obviously Rees had other reason than the honoring of an old promise for not publicly divulging what Burgess had told him about Blunt. Except for Burgess's word, he had no evidence with which to support an accusation of treason against Blunt and to make the charge without proof would put him at gravest legal and social risk. In the close to forty years since Burgess's mention of Blunt's name as a member of the Cambridge group, Blunt's public eminence had rocketed: he was not only a world-renowned historian of art but he was now Keeper of the Queen's Pictures and an intimate of the Palace. Not until Margie had died and Goronwy was himself approaching death would he make public mention of what he had for so long privately known about Blunt. In 1977, recounting what was presumed to be his "whole story" to a British journalist, Andrew Boyle, Goronwy finally made his public accusation of Blunt. Boyle, as it happened, was already on Blunt's trail as a spy.

Today, what is probably most significant for us about *A Chapter of Accidents* is the absence of all suggestion that Goronwy himself, in this period of his involvement with Burgess, also spied for the Soviet Union, whether in response to Burgess's invitation or on his own or other initiative. In fact, in nothing which Goronwy ever wrote does he offer the slightest hint that he was himself a Comintern agent. He readily acknowledges in his memoir that through most of the Thirties he was a Marxist and a Communist sympathizer, but he gives no indication that his revolutionary involvement ever went beyond that of a fellow-traveler – spying was never his own occupation, only the occupation of others. He firmly declares that with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in the late summer of 1939, he became permanently disaffected with Communism. This no one has of course questioned.

In his youthful travels on the Continent, the grim actuality of Nazism had been lastingly impressed upon Goronwy and he never wavered in his hatred and fear of fascism. He was more than commonly alert to the threat to England which was posed by Chamberlain's ap-

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peasement of Hitler at Munich. Forever after the Pact, he was a patriot. In England as in America, however, it is now a long time since patriotism has earned the respect of intellectuals. Love of country is all but ceded to the side of reaction. Even where the patriot is not thought to be politically retrograde, he is assumed to be ungenerous and a creature of convenient moral accommodation.

A Chapter of Accidents moves briskly over the war years and Goronwy's rise in the army from an early volunteer in the Welsh Fusilliers, posted to the docks of Liverpool, to a Lieutenant Colonel on the staff of Field Marshal Montgomery. In this high post he was privy to top military secrets, including Allied plans for the landings in Normandy. The fact that despite his sensitive wartime position, Goronwy continued to frequent the Bentinck Street flat and to drink with Burgess and the riffraff whom Burgess collected around him is, for me, the most disturbing feature of his memoir and of his life. It was early in the war that he had met and married Margie. Margie, too, became friendly with Burgess – he was named godfather to one of the Reeses' sons.

And yet Rees reports in *A Chapter of Accidents* that he was never certain that Burgess had told him the truth when he said that he was a Comintern agent, nor was he convinced that if Burgess had once been a spy, he had continued in this traitorous activity during and after the war. The reader is bound to find such naivete difficult to credit. Day in and day out, before the war, during the war, after the war, the two men engaged in constant political talk. It is hard to suppose that Goronwy drew no conclusions from Burgess's strange associations or from his many shifts in declared political opinion. How could it not have occurred to Rees that behind his various masquerades Burgess pursued the underground assignment to which he had confessed?

However, nothing of Goronwy's historical past, nothing of his political past, entered into our early acquaintance with him and Margie. Even the fact that this attractive couple seemed not to be welcome among their old Oxford friends didn't intrude into our relationship. At most, it left us mildly puzzled.

No matter how well-informed American visitors may be in the history and literature of England, they rarely know as much about that country as the average educated Englishman knows about America. An Englishman's command of past and present American culture and custom is like a natural extension of his schooling in the history of his own country. Goronwy's store of information about the political culture of

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the United States in recent decades, particularly in the sphere which we in our country now refer to as "cultural politics," that area of our political discourse which bears most directly upon ideas and principles and upon the moral life of the nation, never failed to astonish me.

At the time we met the Reeses, almost twenty years had elapsed since the publication of Lionel's novel, *The Middle of the Journey,* yet Goronwy had this document of American cultural politics at his fingertips. He spoke of Lionel's book as if it had been published only yesterday. He was especially interested in the character of Gifford Maxim. At home, it was generally known of Lionel's novel that Maxim was based upon Whittaker Chambers, Lionel's college acquaintance who had now become famous in the trials that followed his charge that Alger Hiss, an official in the American State Department, had, like Chambers himself, been a Soviet agent. The real-life source of Lionel's fictional character made, I felt, an odd topic for such a reiteration of interest on Goronwy's part, yet Goronwy was apparently magnetized by it. Again and again, he returned to questioning Lionel: How well had he known Chambers? In college? After college? When had he first discovered that Chambers was a Soviet spy and how had this information come to him? Had Lionel liked Chambers? Had he trusted him? What did he know of Chambers's life before joining the Communist Party? After he left the Party? Did Lionel feel that Chambers had been treated fairly by the American intellectual community? It was soon clear that the importance which Lionel's novel had for Rees had little to do with its merit as a work of fiction and all to do with Rees's interest in the original of this one of its characters.

Throughout these interrogations, it was only Chambers of whom Goronwy inquired, never Hiss with whom Chambers's name was now so inexorably linked. There were now of course a number of people in England, as in America, who believed that Hiss was innocent of the accusation which Chambers had brought against him, but Goronwy was not among them. Implicit in all his references to Chambers was the opinion – it was ours as well – that Chambers had been telling the truth when he accused Hiss as he did and that Hiss had spied for the Soviet Union. It was not debate about Hiss's guilt or innocence which moved Rees to question Lionel. On this point his mind was settled. What he sought from Lionel was personal information about Chambers, of a kind which was not contained in Lionel's book.

As I reconstruct these conversations in the light of the present-day charge against Goronwy, that he, too, like the members of the Cambridge group, Burgess and Philby and the rest, spied for the Soviet

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Union, they necessarily take on new meaning. I realize that in Chambers's burdened life Goronwy recognized a parallel to his own much-burdened life and something of this must even have communicated itself to me at the time because, as I say, I suggested to Lionel that, like Chambers, Goronwy may once have been an agent of the Soviet Union, or perhaps a British agent, or both. But Lionel was not inclined to speculation of this sort and I soon dropped the subject.

Actually, in some important part I shared Lionel's reluctance to see Goronwy as a figure in this dark political program of our century. I preferred to think of him as reckless in love rather than in politics, a romantic rather than an ideological adventurer. Yet considering the fact that he was the most attractive man I ever met, it is strange that he was never, for my imagination, an object of direct sexual interest. One evening he and I were alone together at our London hotel while we waited for Margie and Lionel, each engaged elsewhere, to join us. Goronwy was restless; he moved about the room nervously. This was unusual for him. He was not a person who was uncomfortable in his skin. He went to the window and drew aside the heavy draperies; for several moments he stood looking out on our quiet street. Perhaps he was counting the Rolls Royces at our curb. Without turning, he said quietly: "This is where I would have taken you if we had met when we were younger." I made no reply; none was required of me. It was a seduction without an invitation and until I came to write this recollection of our friendship, I had not again thought of it.

Today, there is still something unnatural to me in having to think of Goronwy as only secondarily a charming and intelligent friend and first as a member of his radical generation, someone who so easily but calamitously overstepped the line between Communist fellow-traveling and disloyalty to his country. Whittaker Chambers had similarly breached this thin wall and similarly destroyed his life. Lionel had been at college with Chambers but I scarcely knew him – until, all unexpectedly, he had one day appeared at our apartment to see me. His purpose was to solicit my help in his spying operation. (I have in several places written about this encounter.) He wanted me to receive mail for him. In spy parlance, I was to be his mail drop. I said "no" to his request but I am not convinced that I deserve any great moral credit for the decision. Had the scene been enacted six months earlier, it might have had an opposite outcome. I was approaching the end of what had been almost a year-long commitment to the Communist cause; my disenchantment was about to be translated into a lifelong opposition to the Soviet despotism. Although it had never occurred to me to join the Communist Party, I had been for these past months a devoted adherent

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of its principles and program and if Chambers had approached me earlier I am far from certain that I would have refused. Treason and even illegalities less extreme than treason are not my moral style and my taste for risk is sadly limited to the life of discourse, yet I recall my bumbling delay in replying to Chambers and the throb of pride which ran through me because he thought me worthy to be part of his conspiracy.

In the years that followed our first stay in Oxford, Lionel and I were frequently back and forth to England and often in the company of the Reeses. Goronwy never spoke of Guy Burgess or Aberystwyth. He reserved to himself many areas of his experience: he never referred to his Welsh boyhood or his travels on the Continent; he never mentioned his novels or his having been an editor of the *Spectator;* he made no mention of having been Estates Bursar at All Souls or of his having been sent to Germany at the end of the war to help in the administration of that conquered country. Even on innocent themes he talked around large gaps, as one might walk around holes in an otherwise solid pavement.

Had it not been for the publication of Costello and Tsarev's *Deadly Illusions,* the case against Rees might have remained what it had always been for the English intellectual establishment: Rees was the man who had so contemptibly betrayed a friend. But this was only the lower-case secret which had had such major consequences for him. It was an upper-case Secret which, as Jenny tells us, had always hung over the Rees household and it was this Secret which she set out to uncover. In her book she lifts the veil on what Margie and Goronwy had for the whole of their marriage struggled to conceal: far back in the Thirties, before the war and even before he had met Margie, Goronwy had briefly been a Comintern agent. He had not stayed long in Stalin's service, probably less than a year. With the Nazi-Soviet Pact, he had become forever disillusioned with Communism. Poor hectored, guilty Goronwy! His long, wearying effort to bury his moment of error had failed.

In the spring of 1965, Norman Mailer published his novel *An American Dream* in England and came to London for its publication. Beverly, his wife at the time, accompanied him. Norman and I had long been friends and I invited him and his wife to visit us in Oxford. Would he like a party, I asked him on the telephone, or would he prefer that we simply have a few people in for dinner? He chose the latter and in reply to my inquiry whether there was anyone whom he would especially like to meet, proposed Iris Murdoch – he had always been interested in her

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work. We could seat eight people at our dining table in the Eastman house, the residence which accompanied Lionel's appointment, and to the Mailers and ourselves we added Iris Murdoch and her husband, John Bayley, and Margie and Goronwy Rees. The Reeses and the Mailers would stay the night.

I had met Iris Murdoch on several occasions during our Oxford year; like Elizabeth Bowen, she was a notable presence in the university community. She had once asked me to lunch in London but I had found myself as little comfortable in her orderly company as with her disorderly novels. What, I wondered, was this bright-eyed rosy-cheeked woman, so seemingly down to earth and wholesome, up to with these fictional extravagances of hers? Where, in the actual living of her life, did she fit into the rousing universe of her fantasy?

I discovered no answer to these questions in our lunch together. She took me to a family-style Italian restaurant in Soho and over lunch questioned me about my family background and upbringing. I was flattered by her interest in my life but it also made me feel oddly childish. It occurred to me that she might be planning to put me in a novel. That didn't happen.

Within short distance of Oxford there is the town of Cowley. It is importantly devoted to the manufacture of motor cars. As early as the Sixties, Cowley had a supermarket or its simulacrum. Each week I was driven there by an Oxford acquaintance, a young American woman married to an Oxford don. Otherwise, I did my shopping in Oxford's covered market.

By American standards the Cowley supermarket was a modest enterprise; it was in no way as colorful as the covered market on Oxford's High Street. But I welcomed any change in my domestic routine. I was amused by the astonishment with which the young women at the checkout counters regarded my heavily-loaded cart – they looked at it suspiciously, almost fearfully, as if its abundance portended the return of the American army. In reality, ours was a frugal table compared to the meals which we were served by our new Oxford friends. The English were not only more lavish in their hospitality than I was accustomed to in America; they seemed to have a different relation to food. They were more open in their appreciation of what they ate and drank and made a virtually pagan ritual of the appearance of seasonal foods such as strawberries or raspberries.

Obedient to local custom, I served an extra course at our dinner for Mailer. Poor Mailer! This prolonged our time at table and his suffering. He sat at my right, with Iris Murdoch at his right, and I was able to eavesdrop on their conversation. His anticipated meeting with Murdoch

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was far from turning out as he must have hoped. She seemed not to understand Mailer's concern with the theater. He had for some time wanted to make his Hollywood novel, *The Deer Park,* into a play and expectably he inquired of Murdoch about her recent achievement in bringing her fiction to the stage. What part, he asked, had she herself had in transforming *A Severed Head* into a play? Was it she who had done most of the dramatization or had this been the work of J. B. Priestley, her collaborator? The tone of his inquiry was entirely respectful. It was clear, if only to me, that he was merely looking for information which might be useful to him in his own attempt to write for the theater. But Murdoch apparently found his questions intrusive and even impertinent. She answered him so cuttingly that at last he turned to me, grinning but red-faced, and drew a finger across his throat. His was the severed head.

But rescue was not yet to be his. Returning to his conversational duty, he quit the subject of playwriting, only to plunge into the yet darker pit of philosophy. When Mailer had spoken to Murdoch of the theater, her rebuff had been unwarrantedly harsh. Now, with considerably more justification, the annihilation was total. Mailer's quixotic fictional representation of the human condition might merit critical disapproval but in the wide range of his work he had regularly demonstrated his capacity to master various fields of technical learning. It required no special training in philosophy, however, to be aware of his miscomprehension of Existentialism, a philosophical doctrine to which he made frequent reference in his writing. Repeatedly in his work he used the word "existential" when he had it in mind to indicate that something was actual or pertained to his experience. Iris Murdoch taught philosophy and had written a definitive book on Existentialism. As I overheard Mailer at my table moving ever more inescapably to his philosophical doom, I wished that I could warn him: Stay off that subject! He at last realized his mistake. He was manly in defeat. "I give up," he announced to Murdoch. "You're the champ!"

Dinner over, I was finally able to bring Mailer and Goronwy together in the sitting room. They seemed to like each other at once: each must instinctively have perceived in the other the hard core of venturousness which lay beneath the surface of his social amiability. I suspect that each of them sensed of the other that he had lived, and perhaps still lived, at what Mailer so admiringly calls the cutting edge of experience. For the remainder of the evening, the two men sat apart from the rest of us, talking prodigiously and drinking prodigiously. Except for a slight thickening of their laughter and a glistening on the brow, neither of

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them exhibited any effect of the drink. Murdoch and her husband went home early, as soon as politeness allowed. Only now does it occur to me that she may have vented on Mailer some of the annoyance which she had felt at finding herself at dinner with the infamous Rees.

The next morning, Lionel and I and our houseguests had a long, lazy breakfast and then the Reeses drove the Mailers back to London – which is to say that Margie drove Goronwy and the Mailers back to London. It had to have been as astonishing to Mailer as to Lionel and me that Goronwy didn't drive and was content to be driven everywhere by his wife. To look at him, one would suppose that Goronwy sailed, skied, flew his own plane.

With Margie at the wheel and Beverly at her side, Goronwy and Norman had sat in the back, talking. Later Mailer told me that on their drive back to London, Goronwy had repeated to him a remark of mine, that to an American man his car was an extension of his masculinity. Was this so, Goronwy wanted to know of Mailer, and Mailer assured him that it was. The Reeses deposited the Mailers at their London hotel. So far as I know, they never saw each other again, nor did either of them ever inquire of me about the other.

I could wish to have heard what Mailer and Goronwy talked about so absorbedly that evening in our Oxford sitting room. It was not about espionage, of that I can be fairly certain, but how fascinated Mailer would have been had he been granted a glimpse of the business of spying as Goronwy knew of it through his association with the Cambridge group or even through his own direct involvement. Mailer had spent his writing life as a conjurer of the subversive and forbidden. Yet, in sum, his was of course more a universe of personal than political rebellion. The closer he had drawn to what was meant to be the reality of left-wing revolution, as in his second novel, *Barbary Shore,* the more he was lost in allegory. In *Barbary Shore,* the novel which followed his commanding entrance upon the literary world, he had indeed broached the subject of political treason. But he had been far from penetrating its ignoble actuality: Mailer's spy novel is about the hunt for "a little object" which holds the key to the political future of the democracies; its villain is the FBI in sinister alliance with fascism. Such fictional conspirators as Mailer offers us in *Barbary Shore* would consort but poorly with Goronwy's friend on Bentinck Street or with Burgess's scholarly associate, Sir Anthony Blunt.

Other than his continuing readiness to accept each day as independent of what lay either behind or ahead of it, there was little to connect the author of *Barbary Shore* with the Mailer we introduced to

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Rees. For the Mailer I knew and read, life was not an accretion of experience; it was a progression of unlinked happenings, without any necessary or integral sequence or consequence. His skewed notion of the existential might well have this as its source. The Mailer who wrote *Barbary Shore* had long since yielded place to a newer Mailer, a creature of the newer day. It was his lack of a footing in history that made Mailer so much a man of his own country and century: life was for him always of the present moment, never the total of its moments.

But nothing could have been more the opposite of Goronwy and I wondered if the two men had intuitively recognized this difference which divided them and which, while it allowed them the pleasantest of passing encounters, could promise no future friendship. The British Goronwy was a captive of history. He had no present other than as a sequence or consequence of the past and a foretaste of the future. Like no American life I have known, his was a life heavy with history, tragic with history.

Guy Burgess fled England in 1951. (In *A Chapter of Accidents* Goronwy incorrectly dates his disappearance as 1952.) Before his flight, he phoned Rees at home. Rees was out; Margie took his incoherent message. He was about to do something peculiar, Burgess told her agitatedly, which only Goronwy would understand. In the next days, Goronwy concluded that Burgess had defected to the Soviet Union. More than twenty years later, he records in *A Chapter of Accidents* that it was at this point that he came to realize that Burgess had been telling him the truth when he had confessed to being a Communist agent. Throughout the war and after, Burgess had continued his service to the Comintern.

Even the most authoritative studies of British espionage are a confounding tangle of inconsistencies and of trails which are not pursued to their proposed ends. Although Goronwy regularly makes his appearance in these works, relative to the celebrity of such figures as Blunt or Burgess or Philby or Maclean he remains essentially an illusory figure. The historical literature leaves wide gaps in the narrative of his life, casts a shadow which is never fully defined. A shadow it nevertheless is. Goronwy himself of course complicated the public record of his career by his need to disguise his own role in Soviet espionage. He gives us, for instance, two versions of the days following Burgess's flight from England, his story in *A Chapter of Accidents* and the story he told Andrew Boyle a few years later, nearing the end of his life, which Boyle re-

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counted in his volume, *The Climate of Treason*.

According to *A Chapter of Accidents*, when Rees realized that Burgess had defected to the Soviet Union he telephoned the information to an official of MI5, a mutual friend of his and Burgess. The official is unnamed. That same evening, Goronwy says, the official transmitted the message to someone more highly placed than himself in MI5. The next day Goronwy was visited at his home outside London by "another friend of Guy's" who came to urge him not to share with the British security services his conjectures about Burgess's flight. This friend, too, is unnamed and Goronwy goes on to tell us that he rejected his visitor's appeal and went to the headquarters of MI5 where he was interviewed by one of its officers, again unnamed. Not only did this officer confirm Goronwy's belief that Burgess had gone to the Soviet Union. He volunteered to Goronwy the further information that Burgess had been accompanied by Donald Maclean.

The story given by Goronwy to Boyle in 1977 has little in common with this account in Rees's volume five years earlier. In his story to Boyle, Goronwy again states that a mutual friend of his and Burgess came to plead with him not to reveal anything about Burgess to the security services. But now he names this visitor: it was Anthony Blunt. The remainder of his story to Boyle is both new and shocking. Convinced – he tells Boyle – that he must share what he knows with his government, after Burgess's flight he phoned David Footman, a friend in the offices of Intelligence. Footman had relayed the information to a higher official, Guy Liddell, who a few days later called Goronwy and arranged an interview with him in his office. But Liddell had then delayed their meeting and shifted it to lunch at his club. To this meeting he brought an unexpected third party, Anthony Blunt. "Blunt and Liddell," Boyle writes, "took up where Blunt had left off. They jointly urged Rees not to press with his speculation about Burgess," explaining to Rees that while they had evidence of espionage against Maclean, they had none against Burgess. They warned Rees that things would "go hard with him" if he persisted in his charges against Burgess. Goronwy nevertheless persisted and eventually Liddell was forced to put him in touch with another security official. This time the interview took place at Intelligence headquarters and without the presence of Blunt. Goronwy was now listened to but in "strained silence." He was treated, he recalled to Boyle, as if he were himself the traitor.

By Boyle's report, several days passed before Rees was again summoned to MI5 for further questioning. When he was at last reinterviewed, he held back nothing – except, apparently, the fact of his

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own engagement in espionage. This pertinent information he seems to have withheld even from Boyle. From this fuller, more accurate account which he gave Boyle, we learn that, in his second meeting with Liddell, Goronwy revealed that Burgess had once identified Blunt as a fellow-conspirator.

As evidence of the way in which at this time the political winds were blowing in England through the halls of power, the story given us by Boyle is startling enough. But it was not only in official circles that Goronwy's attempt to disclose what he knew about the Cambridge spies brought him alone into disfavor. His belief that it was his duty to speak up against Communist infiltration ran counter to the temper of the period and violated that seemingly most sacred of Britain's moral imperatives, loyalty to one's friends.

Rees's revelations were no surprise to Andrew Boyle: he had long been on Blunt's trail. On November 15, 1979, largely as a result of the publication of Boyle's book, *The Fourth Man* – its title was only later changed to *The Climate of Treason* – Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was forced to admit in Parliament that as far back as 1964, fifteen years previously, Sir Anthony Blunt had confessed his espionage to the British Security Services: he had been recruited by Soviet Intelligence while still a Cambridge don and throughout the war had regularly passed information to the Soviet Union. Nothing had been officially done in response to Blunt's confession, nor did the British government fall as a result of Thatcher's admission, or even totter. In proper British fashion, the scandal was absorbed. Sir Anthony was now relieved of his title but he never went to jail. As if in classic self-parody, a well-situated member of the British intellectual establishment is said to have remarked that Blunt's having been deprived of his accustomed place at the high tables of Cambridge was one of the worst catastrophes of the century.

Rosamond Lehmann is not without her share of responsibility for the bad light in which Rees is viewed by the British historians of espionage. In an interview with John Costello which Costello reports in his influential volume, *Mask of Treachery*, Lehmann described Goronwy as "a thumping liar." The interview in which she gave this characterization of Rees took place in the mid-Eighties. Rees had by this time been dead for several years and the British public was by now well aware of the existence of the Cambridge spies. We are moved to ask what precisely was the thumping lie of which Lehmann was accusing Rees. Relative to whom did she indict her old lover: a truthful Burgess? A truthful Philby or Maclean? A truthful Blunt? If she was suggesting to Costello that Goronwy was himself a Comintern agent, why did she not forthrightly

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come out with her charge? And in what way did his concealment of his activities as an agent differentiate Rees from the spies whom she failed to indict?

The fact is that throughout the Thirties Rosamond Lehmann was herself an ardent fellow-traveler, as who among the left-wing writers and intellectuals of her circle was not? When her husband, Wogan Phillips, came into his title and as Lord Milford took his seat in the House of Lords, he was an avowed Communist. A few days after Margaret Thatcher acknowledged Blunt's treason in Parliament, Blunt gave a lengthy interview in which, his moral confidence unshaken, he told the British press that, yes, in the mid-Thirties he had chosen "political conscience against loyalty to country." He could have been speaking for most of his intellectual generation. Throughout the Western democracies at this time, it was by its tolerance of Soviet Communism that political idealism defined itself and its opposition to the regressive forces of capitalism.

In 1956, Burgess and Maclean appeared on television in Moscow and Goronwy's conviction that Burgess had fled to the Soviet Union was unarguably confirmed. Burgess was Lehmann's friend, too, as was Blunt. Rosamond Lehmann might similarly have guessed what had been Burgess's destination when he disappeared from his own country. When Burgess emerged on Moscow television, a weeping Blunt all but confessed to Lehmann that he was also a Soviet agent. It is doubtful that she needed to have the political connection between Blunt and Burgess or their connection with the Comintern spelled out for her.

I met Rosamond Lehmann only once: on a visit to London in the early Seventies, Lionel and I were invited to dinner with her at the home of a London doctor, Patrick Woodcock. The only other guest was Christopher Isherwood. Dr. Woodcock was not a writer but he had many literary friends. I was delighted to meet Isherwood. As a fiction critic many years earlier, I had reviewed his novel *Prater Violet*. It was a small book but it had towered over most of the novels which came to my desk.

The literary reputation which Lehmann had earned with *Dusty Answer* had steadily faded with the years and the celebrated beauty of her young womanhood had dramatically vanished – it was in fact difficult to imagine that it had ever existed. I had been warned that she had gained an extraordinary amount of weight but I could not have been prepared for her altered appearance: at Dr. Woodcock's, she all but overflowed the little sofa in his sitting room. So radical a change in appearance was not to be explained as simply the depredation of time. For my sake, for

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the sake of all of us, it had to be understood as a willed rejection by Lehmann of her previous self, perhaps in circuitous fashion related to another of the assaults upon reality which were reported of her. It was widely said that she supposed herself to be in communication with her dead daughter.

Just as Isherwood's *Prater Violet* had once saved me, if only for the time it took to read it, from the dispiriting run of novels which had to be dealt with by a weekly reviewer, now, at least for the few moments that I was able to engage him apart from the rest of the company, he rescued me from the contemplation of where time had carried Rosamond Lehmann since the glory days of her young womanhood. We were at last forced to rejoin the rest of the party and I cannot recall which of us it was, she or I, who brought Goronwy's name into the conversation. I daresay it was I. "Goronwy!" Lehmann spat out venomously. Her contempt was unmediated. I remember reading of Freud that when he was dying of cancer, he refused medication to ease his pain; he didn't want his mind dulled,and he was indignant to learn that his personal physician had been giving him a narcotic. *Bei welchen Recht?* By what right, he demanded, did someone administer to him a medication he had expressly forbidden? *Bei welchen Recht:* the three hard words had remained my address to all impermissible power, the cry of brave spirit overridden by hostile circumstance, and they echoed in my mind as I thought of the virtuous authority that Rosamond Lehmann took to herself in her condemnation of Rees.

To the end of his life, ill and dying, with Margie gone, Goronwy had only reason to depend upon. It had not always stood by him but he had stood by it. To depend upon reason is to leave oneself open to the unreason which fills the universe. The reliable Rosamund Lehmann could break off her chat with the dead in order to pass judgment upon the unreliable Goronmwy.

In the fall of 1975, Goronwy made his first and only visit to New York. Our son, who had been living in London, had come home to be with his dying father. Leaving Lionel in his charge, I took Goronwy to lunch in the Oak Room of the Plaza Hotel, the nearest approach we then had in New York to the Connaught Grill in London. Goronwy would appreciate the similarity and the differences. He had an Englishman's lunch, a full-course dinner, and after lunch we rode up Fifth Avenue by bus. On our ride, I pointed out some of the passing sights of the city: the view across Central Park, the Children's Zoo, the

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Frick and Guggenheim Museums, the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As we crossed 110th Street to the West side, we had a glimpse of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and, beyond it, Columbia University.

Goronwy visited alone with Lionel for a few minutes at our apartment and then I exchanged places with our son – he took over as Goronwy's guide for the afternoon. I never again saw or heard from Goronwy though he lived for another four years. On Lionel's death, Jenny Rees wrote me an affectionate letter. Goronwy's expression of condolence was his piece in *Encounter*.

From this memorial I learn that Goronwy spent the next morning after his visit with us at the United Nations. His arrival in New York had happened to coincide with a crisis in the city's financial history; its bonds were careening into worthlessness, and financial stability had had to be restored by a major injection of funds from the Teachers' Union. The improbable seemed to accompany Goronwy. The remainder of his column, following his tribute to Lionel, is devoted to an account of the debate and affirmative vote in the Third Committee in the General Assembly of the United Nations on the condemnation of Zionism as racism. He writes:

> It is difficult to convey the sense of mingled horror and incredulity with which I listened to the debate in the Third Committee. One knows of course that there are real and genuine grounds for conflict between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbors, and that this conflict provokes acute and bitter dissension, in which right is not entirely on Israel's side. And one would concede that the United Nations provides the only public forum in which such a conflict might become the subject of rational discussion, out of which, however improbably, some fruitful result might possibly arise. But what was shameful and disgraceful was that the discussion should be conducted, as it was in the Third Committee, in terms, not of a political conflict between states, but of a squalid and brutal anti-Semitism of a kind, one had thought, the world would no longer tolerate.

He continues:

> There were ghosts haunting the Third Committee that day: the ghosts of Hitler and Goebbels and Julius Streicher, grinning with delight to hear, not only Israel, but Jews as such denounced in language which would have provoked hysterical applause at any Nuremberg rally and justify a special edition of *Der Stürmer*. And there were other ghosts

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> also at the debate; the ghosts of the six million dead in Dachau and Sachsenhausen and other extermination camps, listening to the same voices which had cheered and jeered and abused them as they made their way to the gas chambers. For the fundamental thesis advanced by the supporters of the resolution, and approved by the majority of the Third Committee, was that to be a Jew, and to be proud of it, and to be determined to preserve the right to be a Jew, is to be an enemy of the human race.

Recently, I spent an evening with British friends who were visiting in New York. Because I had already begun this remembrance of Goronwy and he was much in my mind, I brought up his name. It was unwise of me. Fifteen years after his death, nothing had changed in the way the mention of him was met. These friends of mine had all been acquainted with the Reeses; one of them had known them far more intimately than I. They spoke of Goronwy dismissively, almost derisively. There was a considerably younger woman in the party. She had known Goronwy when she was growing up in London and she seemed to be made uncomfortable by the unkind tone in which they were speaking of him. In an aside to me she murmured, "He was always very nice to me." And she added, "He was the most attractive man I have ever met." I smiled at her use of these familiar words. I felt a quick flash of affection for her.

My English friends had no criticism of Margie Rees. They were agreed that Margie was a dear, a darling. And what she had had to put up with, married to that scoundrel! There was of course also no word of criticism of Burgess or Blunt or any other member of the Cambridge ring. I was unable to keep an edge of anger out of my voice as I brought the talk back to what, as I saw it, was a crucial omission. "And Burgess? Or Blunt?" I asked. "What about them? They weren't scoundrels, just our everyday garden-variety spies?" This was met by a short second of silence among the company, like an intake of breath, before our host smoothly turned to his neighbor and broached another topic of conversation. I and my notions of spies and spying, of honor and dishonor, of proper and improper loyalties, were not to be given a further hearing. Ever. For my uncongenial views and for the bad manners they bred in me, I was written out of the lives of these friends.

In his *Encounter* column, Goronwy linked his censure of the United Nations with his warm commemoration of Lionel. Celebrating him as an individual, Goronwy also spoke of him as an American and a Jew. "It was an essential part of the pleasure of his friendship," he wrote, "that he remained always and unmistakably an American." The point of his American identity has not often been made of Lionel and, making it

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here, Goronwy may well have been thinking of his own Welsh identity and the part it must surely have played in the shaping of his life. Rees the Oxonian, Rees the Londoner, Rees the man of the world had never forgotten – had perhaps never been let forget – his Welsh origin. To consult the documents surrounding his life, not least of them Elizabeth Bowen's *Death of the Heart,* is indeed to have the realization freshly imposed upon one of the extent to which the hostile judgment passed upon Goronwy after the Aberystwyth episode was due to his being outside the social fold – Bowen's novel makes it clear that even where he might seem to be warmly welcomed among the author's own kind, he was the object of their social condescension. England, as it was then viewed by its literary and intellectual establishment, belonged to those who by birth had their designated place in its ruling social order. And while Goronwy himself never raised the question of whether Burgess's treason would have been condoned as it was if Burgess had been the product of a grammar school rather than of Eton, or whether he, Goronwy, would have been condemned as he was for his Aberystwyth disclosures if he had been an Etonian rather than the product of a Cardiff grammar school, his memoir clears the ground for just such speculation.

Well before Goronwy was a patriot of Britain, he was a patriot of Wales and it forever suited his temperament to cherish this complication. It is said of him that he was lacking in loyalty to his friend Guy Burgess, but it can never be said of him that he lacked in loyalty to his parents or to the circumstances of his birth, whatever the distance he traveled from the confining influences of the "Calvinistic Methodism" of his upbringing. It was as if, because he wasn't born to the society in which he found himself at Oxford and after Oxford and therefore didn't finally belong to it, he could suppose himself to be free of its dictate. He could violate its proprieties and transgress its borders. We may not know what led Burgess to his preference for the disreputable associations which he is said to have enjoyed on Bentinck Street, but Goronwy's readiness to join in this company is, I think, readily explained by his sense of himself as someone who by birth bore the ineradicable taint of the outsider.

I should like to suppose that Goronwy would have been pleased by Jenny's biography of him, but I am not certain of this. I am not sure that he would have appreciated it as it deserves. It was my impression of Goronwy that he was lacking in parental involvement and pride; the fact that Jenny fails to indicate this is testimony to the generous spirit of her

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book. In the first year that Lionel and I knew Goronwy and Margie, their twin sons attended the same school in London as our son. Now and then we would speak, as parents inevitably do, of the errors or deficiencies in the way our children were being dealt with. Goronwy contributed his customary good sense to these conversations but he spoke as from an emotional remove: his children were not in the forefront of his feeling or thought.

Jenny's volume is painstakingly thorough; it could scarcely be more objective and balanced. Clear-eyed, she is also deeply respecting of her father. Chapter by chapter, she traces his family background, his university career, his literary associations and professional undertakings. She situates his story in the public domain and, as much as possible, keeps herself out of it. Although she mentions Rees's womanizing, she regards it as outside the proper province of her investigation. Her Mr. Nobody is a public person, even a public issue.

I'm troubled by the title of Jenny's book, *Looking for Mr. Nobody;* I feel that it is misleading. It seems to me to suggest that Jenny is writing about someone who, in Henry James's happy phrase, fails to rise to the level of appearance. Actually, it refers to the fact that Goronwy felt of himself that he was without "character." He had no "I." At Oxford, well before the distractions of his friendship with Burgess, he read Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* and found in its pages on personal identity the phrase which he would later use in self-description, "a bundle of sensations." Jenny recalls a rhyme which her father frequently repeated to his children:

> As I was going up the stair,
> I met a man who wasn't there.
> He wasn't there again today;
> I wish that man would go away.

While I do not entirely comprehend what Goronwy meant by his lack of identity, I take it that he was speaking of his lack of a discernible intention or direction in his psychological make-up rather than of a pathology of depersonalization or of the small space which he may have supposed that he filled in the universe.

The purpose of Jenny's book is clearly stated: she wishes to solve the mystery which always hung over her father's life. More specifically, she is determined to find out whether or not her father was ever a Soviet agent. In 1993, in their volume, *Deadly Illusions,* Costello and Tsarev had named him as a co-conspirator with the Cambridge spy ring. This had never been said in Costello's previous volumes but by the time Costello

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and Tsarev published their joint study, the Soviet Union had collapsed and Western scholars had new access to Russian files. Was this how Goronwy's role had come to light? Was this the Secret which her parents had for so long tried to conceal?

Jenny was not prepared to accept the accusation against her father without further proof than was offered in *Deadly Illusions*. If, at the time of the Aberystwyth scandal, Goronwy's critics suspected him of espionage, they had never made the accusation. To be sure, in an interview which Anthony Blunt had given shortly before his death in 1983, he had named Rees as a fellow-conspirator and this statement had been publicly reported. But it had made little public impression. It was the charge brought against Rees in *Deadly Illusions* that finally impelled Jenny to seek out the truth of her father's relation to the Cambridge spies.

In the end, her search led Jenny to Moscow and a meeting with Tsarev himself. She had already spoken to him from London by phone – for many years Tsarev had been stationed in London and he spoke fluent English. To her phoned inquiry about her father, he had replied courteously that yes, Rees had briefly been a Soviet agent. It had been his task to supply political hearsay – he was assigned to listen to conversations at dinner at All Souls, a frequent dining place for persons high in government service, and to pass on any information he picked up which might be of use to the Soviet Union. Her father had been recruited in 1938, Tsarev further told Jenny, but he had terminated his service the following year when he had broken with Communism in consequence of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and after the Pact he had not again been heard from by Soviet Intelligence. All in all, the involvement had been modest and short-lived. There was no file for him in Moscow. What information existed was to be found only in the file of Guy Burgess. As Rees's daughter, Jenny was at liberty to see it.

A less urgent investigator than Jenny Rees would no doubt have been content to close the book with this exchange. Jenny, however, was unsatisfied; she was determined to learn exactly what Tsarev had meant in saying that Rees had been "recruited" in 1938. What did the word imply? Did it mean that her father had been a fully-fledged agent of the USSR?

In search of answers with which she could rest, Jenny decided to go to Russia for a direct interview with the Soviet historian. Tsarev's Moscow headquarters were in a building adjacent to the old Lubyanka prison. In his office Jenny came at once to the point of her visit. What did Tsarev have in mind when he used the word "recruited" of Rees's engagement in spying for the Soviet Union? Had her father been a fully-

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fledged agent?

"A fully-fledged agent, no," Tsarev replied in response to her insistence upon precision. But an agent he had nevertheless been and one who was wholly aware of the nature of the operation in which he cooperated. "They were recruited for the cause, the Communist cause," Tsarev spelled out the situation for Jenny. With pedagogic patience, he summed up Rees's role. "Rees could not be called an 'agent.' He was a 'source' and an 'operational contact'." He was motivated, said Tsarev, by "romanticism" and "ideological conviction."

And so Jenny's investigation had at last come to its end. She had discovered the truth of her father's relation to the Cambridge spies. Rees had been a Soviet agent, but he had not been a fully-fledged agent, not a spy in the sense in which his Cambridge associates were spies. He had had a code name but he had not been under immediate orders, expected to do as he was bid, whatever the assignment. In the language of spy scholarship, he had been "an agent of influence." In the contest for power between Communism and democracy, he had played his small part: he had made his minuscule contribution to the success of the other side by passing on such news as could be picked up at the dining tables of All Souls. This paltry involvement he had then spent the rest of his life trying to hide and redress, only to bring his world tumbling about his ears.

Rees hadn't been important enough to have his own file in Moscow, but he had been promising enough to have a place in Burgess's file and a code name, "Gross" – the name was apparently a crude amalgam of the "G" of Goronwy and his last name. Reporting to his Moscow contact, Burgess had boasted that he had "Tony" – Anthony Blunt – in Cambridge and "Gross" in Oxford as "talent spotters." But as Tsarev put it to Jenny, " 'Gross' had never realized himself in the role Burgess had singled out for him. We know he did not because this talent spotter [in Oxford] was somebody else." Even as a spy, Goronwy had failed to fulfill the expectations that the people of his acquaintance had for him!

Tsarev's summary to Jenny of Rees's performance as a spy gave me the answer to a question of my own. Throughout the war and even in his position of trust on the staff of Field Marshal Montgomery, Rees had maintained his intimacy with Burgess, visiting regularly at the Bentinck Street flat. As I re-read *A Chapter of Accidents,* this struck me as incautious in the extreme and, as I say, I also found it difficult to believe that as late as 1951 Goronwy was uncertain whether Burgess had really been a Communist agent and, if he had been, whether he was still engaged in

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this activity. Jenny's interview with Tsarev supplied a possible explanation, if not an excuse, for Rees's carelessness in having maintained his friendship with Burgess and even for his doubt of Burgess's continuing allegiance to the Soviet Union. Following the Pact, when Rees had himself broken with Communism, both Burgess and Blunt – Tsarev told Jenny – had similarly announced that they were no longer Communists. This was not the truth, but Goronwy had believed them or at least hoped that he could. Not until Burgess defected to the Soviet Union did Rees allow himself to realize the extent of his friend's deception.

In his own account of things, Rees reports that in his anxiety to wring the truth from Burgess – had he or had he not spied for the Soviet Union? Was he or was he not still a Comintern agent? – he had resorted to a dangerous lie: he had told Burgess that he had deposited with his lawyer a sealed letter in which he recorded Burgess's 1936 confession to him. This was a dangerous move. The threat would not have been lost on Burgess and could well have proposed a counter-move. With his connections in Moscow, Burgess could at any time store away incriminating information about Rees. There is no evidence that Burgess did this. So far as we know, he never deliberately set out to implicate Rees in his espionage or otherwise do him harm. But the fact that clever Goronwy could have delivered himself into Burgess's hands in this fashion indicates how little he belonged in the hazardous company of fully-fledged agents.

"Romanticism" and "ideological conviction": the terms are Tsarev's but could we better describe the motives which, in the Thirties and Forties, moved not Goronwy alone but so many intellectuals in his country and ours to choose Soviet Communism in preference to the problem-ridden processes of democracy? Time passes and for those who were not yet born in the Thirties and Forties, it becomes daily less credible that a few decades ago Stalin's repressive regime could appeal as it did to the idealistic young and not only to the young but to their elders who, we could suppose, might have known better, reputable writers and artists, lawyers, doctors, university professors, clerics, so many of whom gave themselves so trustingly to the beguilements of the Soviet propaganda machine. When I think of this folly of a generation, it seems hardly fair that Goronwy, whose service to the Soviet Union was so brief in duration and whose assignment as a Comintern agent was all but ludicrous in its nature – to eavesdrop on his dinner table companions at All Souls! – should be singled out as he was for scorn.

We remind ourselves, however, that Goronwy was condemned by the British intellectual community not for his politics but for his betrayal

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of a friend and here the national lines, the division in habits of thought between the two countries, England and America, baldly announce themselves. Whittaker Chambers was thought to be a liar because he said that Communists had infiltrated our government. He claimed that he had been a friend of Alger Hiss; Hiss denied the relationship. If Hiss was his friend, as Chambers claimed in bringing his charge against him, Chambers was as guilty as Goronwy of betraying a friend. One never heard this accusation brought against him.

Yet it is not necessary that we share the British exaltation of friendship to recognize that Goronwy was indeed treacherous, peculiarly so, in condemning a friend for conduct in which he had himself engaged. A double standard of this sort is not permitted us. Brief and light-minded as Rees's service to the Soviet Union may have been, it had to be confessed to before Goronwy was free to denounce others as sternly as he did.

It is possible that he eventually came to this realization – conscience demanded it and this scamp and scoundrel, this rogue and roué was never rid of conscience; it was his guide and torment. Long before the hard judgment of others could reach him, Goronwy judged and convicted himself and to refuse to forgive oneself is of course to be forever damned. Goronwy's conscience never gave him the chance of freedom from condemnation. His guilt was at last the whole of his identity, his "character" and his "I."

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EDITH KURZWEIL

The 39th Psychoanalytic Congress

Psychoanalysis is as embattled now, and as fragmented, as it was over eighty years ago, after Carl Jung and Alfred Adler had left the fold to uncover the depths of the human mind – the former by rooting the individual psyche in its genealogical past and in mythology, and the latter by envisioning its liberation in the wake of a socialist future. Freud, who was certain that his own path to the unconscious, though slower, was the only one, based the disputes among his disciples on the fact that psychoanalysis was a scientific therapy, a theory, and a movement. He went on to explain that each aspect depended on the other two, needed inordinate work and attention, and presented its own challenges which, however, were not being and could not be addressed simultaneously. Freud himself was the foremost theorist; he generalized from his own and his followers' cases; and he let them fight among themselves for their standing in the movement.

Anyone who attended the meetings of the International Psychoanalytic Association in San Francisco, which took place from July 29th to August 5th, 1995, will attest to the fact that psychoanalysts are still fighting for their movement's leadership. Though attacked by outsiders as elitist, conservative, and overrated, psychoanalysts still focus on differences internal to their work: on what constitutes psychoanalysis; on what theories to privilege; on the ways of reaching their patients' psyches; and on interpretations of clinical data.

For an entire week, psychoanalysts from all over the world were putting psychoanalysis on the couch. Whether or not the patient will survive was not in question, although in what condition, and under whose treatment is not entirely clear. The organizers chose a broad theme: "Psychic Reality: Its Impact on the Psychoanalyst and on the Patient Today." As the chair of the program committee, Leon Grinberg of Madrid, stated, "Psychic reality and its relation to objective or material reality is one of the central issues defining psychoanalysis." Haydée Faimberg, of Paris, reminded the audience that Freud, in 1897, used the concept of psychic reality to explain that unconscious desires (and unconscious fantasies) produce real effects. Leo Rangell, of Los Angeles, elaborated on how the move from the concrete to the psychological as the explanatory concept of seduction continues to be of central theoretical importance: "anxiety is always a fusion of inner and outer, of danger

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from without, and mounting psychic tension, with the fear of psychic helplessness from within." For Isidoro Berenstein of Buenos Aires, psychic reality is "a set of experiences, emotions and unconscious representations, personified as objects, which the ego feels to be internal and real." Simply put, it is an individual's way of experiencing the world – based on early personal history, apprehensions and adaptations – and which the psychoanalyst helps him or her learn to look at more objectively. As speaker after speaker analyzed and reported on cases, and drew theoretical conclusions, it became ever clearer that it is infinitely easier to help a patient than it is to derive larger conclusions that would explain the workings of the human mind – not only for psychoanalysts but for philosophers, psychologists, and all other social scientists.

Psychoanalysis is in crisis not only because it has not been able to penetrate to the innermost psyche in order to explain what makes us tick, or because we do not have a definitive model of the mind, but because Freud's implied promise to fully uncover the unconscious, the "true psychical reality," has not been kept. Nevertheless, more and more therapists coming from a variety of backgrounds, and trained by different types of analysts, are aspiring to take up its pursuit.

As the days went by, it became ever clearer that whereas psychic reality was the topic of the congress, material reality was on the minds of the participants. In fact, it never strayed far from their professional consciousness. For the unpleasant presidential election campaign they just had concluded had been rife with the sort of disinformation and ad hominem mudslinging we have become accustomed to in recent national and local elections. To heal the rifts, speakers at the opening session appealed to the need for multicultural, multilingual, and multitheoretical tolerance. However, these clarion calls sounded somewhat clichéd in view of the underlying disagreements which on the one hand are reenactments of dilemmas built into psychoanalytic theory and practice since the inception of the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1908 – which Freud so clearly outlined when he wrote "On the Question of Lay Analysis" – and on the other hand represent careerist and financial motives.

Freud then had warned his American disciples against turning psychoanalysis into a medical specialty. They did not heed him, and the subsequent split between medically and non-medically trained Freudians, which had been fermenting in subterranean waters until the Hamburg Congress in 1985, was brought to the surface by the lawsuit of American psychologists – for loss of income due to lack of access. Now, those who had been marginal were elated at finally having gained entrée to the "centers of power." Consequently, at the business meeting the dais

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was occupied by the entire Executive Council – twenty-four persons, ranging from preceding to future presidents to honorary vice-presidents, to nine vice-presidents, a number of secretaries, delegates, committee chairmen, and others representing three continents and four major languages. "It's our politburo," an analyst whispered to me. "They're rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*," commented another.

Indeed, the two presidential candidates, Otto Kernberg, M.D. and Charles Hanly, Ph.D., are very dissimilar in background and training. Kernberg, born in Vienna, educated and analyzed in Chile and now at the Columbia Institute for Psychoanalytic Training, is one of the most prolific and respected theorists and researchers. Since, among other things, he introduced Melanie Klein's object relations theory in this country, he antagonized the so-called American ego psychologists. (I was told, for instance, that a candidate wanting Kleinian analysis in San Francisco could not get it.) Hanly, an erudite Canadian philosopher turned analyst, had no such powerful enemies. And he had been particularly helpful in facilitating the North American psychoanalytic psychologists' recognition by the IPA. This explains, at least in part, why Kernberg was defeated at home and squeaked in only as a result of his international renown. But external politics as well had an impact, for instance in Argentina, where Kernberg allegedly had backed a so-called fascist psychoanalytic institute over a "clean" one, and in France, because he is supposed to have supported a British presidential candidate over a French one two years ago. Thus the German-speaking members alone were overwhelmingly for Kernberg. And much time was spent on discussing the regrettable fact that a box with a few hundred votes from Argentina had been lost in the mail. Did the London office fail to mail ballots in time? To all the eligible members? Or was this really due to the Argentineans' mail service? They should hold another election, said some. This was done with malice aforethought, said others. Another election is too expensive, said yet another. Still, no one knew what the lost mailbox contained. Eventually it surfaced in Miami and the Executive Committee voted to destroy its contents.

Inevitably, as the newly admitted (mostly psychologists') societies received the blessing of the membership by being formally initiated into the IPA, there were emotionally charged acceptance speeches, ranging from expressions of thanks and gratitude to recalling twenty-seven years of "life on the fringes," from feeling outcast and humiliated to satisfaction at being rescued from "second class citizenship." This kind of melodrama, however, made me ask a number of people what sort of benefit belonging to the IPA would have for their practices, on their

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ability to attract patients. "None whatsoever," was the usual response.

"We always admitted non-medically trained analysts," said nearly every European, Latin American, and South American I spoke to. "This battle, once again, was started by the Americans," replied a Frenchman. "We didn't know whom to vote for," or "I didn't know either of the candidates personally," said some Latin Americans. (The latter were represented en masse, and more Spanish was spoken than at any previous IPA congress. Nevertheless, every South American lamented the lack of patients due to the downturn in their respective economies.) "Finally, we have become equals," said a number of American clinical psychologists – while disagreeing about the advisability of accepting individual membership in the American Psychoanalytic Association (APA), which until now had shunned them.

I was intrigued by the fact that only a few of my many friends told me whom they voted for. Thereby, they seemed to extend their psychoanalytic habit of keeping patients' secrets but indicated, also, their ambivalence about priorities: Freud's heuristic division of psychoanalysis into its three components still holds, and the movement's viability still depends upon the psychoanalysts' steady advances in therapy and theory. To judge by the presenters' many sensitive summaries of cases – by whatever theoretical method or technique and in whatever country – this is where the psychoanalysts' strength continues to be located.

Here, it is impossible for me to get into any of these topics, which turn around such clinical issues as decentered listening and hearing; ego strength and external reality in the treatment of an AIDS patient; implications of symbolism in language and the limits of psychic reality; the shifting boundary between internal and external reality; intrapsychic relations between the ego and the unconscious; regression in the transference and countertransference; belief and its suspension; memory and perception; resistance to psychic change and means of dealing with it; techniques adapted to a variety of patients; diagnoses and prognoses; and much more.

A number of sessions were dedicated to the influence of the material reality of patients on their psychic reality, especially for those growing up and living in repressive societies such as Argentina and Chile, for survivors of the Holocaust and their children; and even on the meaning of discarding the word "genocide" in favor of "Holocaust." Theory, practice, and politics did come together when, in the business meeting a participant got up to ask the members of the IPA to condemn the French president, Mr. Chirac, for having come out in favor of nuclear testing; and when another introduced a session by equating the Holocaust and Hiroshima. On balance, however, the speakers in scientific sessions stuck to their

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topic: to the impact of patients' psychic reality on technique; on borderline and psychotic states; on perversions and neurotic disorders; on reality and dreams; on multidisiplinary approaches and theoretical pluralism; and on a patient's effect on the analyst's psyche. As in Freud's time, the creativity of the analyst in enabling analysands to pursue their talents was discussed in a number of major sessions as well as in the many workshops. All of these presentations, and most of the discussions, were on a most serious and high level.

Nevertheless, the future of psychoanalysis appears bleak. In a way the discipline's organizational success portends its eventual decline. As in every other profession, democratic participation, though an absolute necessity, induces a watering down of substantive theoretical advances by favoring representation by countries, languages, regions, and so on, over outstanding achievement. The IPA was created by disparate, inquisitive minds, by gifted, visionary figures who tended to be a bit lunatic and ambitious, and who were not attuned to organizational discipline and procedures. Freud himself, when confronted with these issues, got impatient, imperious, and set up his secret committee. As Joseph Sandler, the outgoing president, stated, correctly, until recently the sort of contentions that occurred during the latest elections were present as well. But before 1985, the membership of non-medical analysts was a non-issue everywhere except in the United States; behind-the-scenes politicking was over what country would receive the presidency and other honorific jobs; and it was almost possible to keep secret, or reduce rumors to a minimum. Now, the admission of new groups poses unanticipated problems, such as the need to hold elections by mail ballots.

The most serious issue, I observed, revolves around the type of training and personal analyses the members of a particular group have had. That too, however, is not uniform and may range from twice to five times per week. The New York Freudian Society and the Psychoanalytic Center of California, for instance, have members with doctoral degrees ranging from social work to sociology and clinical psychology, as well as others with no more than an M.A. Collegiality, implied Norbert Freedman who represents the International Psychoanalytic Society (IPS) – which consists of the groups newly admitted to the IPA – demands that all members of these societies be treated equally within the IPA, that clinical Ph.D.s not be favored. It is not yet clear whether the democratic impulse will mean that theoretical standards will have to be lowered – by offering equal representation on scientific panels as well as on committees. Time will tell. However, it is certain that just as in the past, the sort of battles rampant in every other American professional association now are being played out within the IPA as well. The enemies

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of psychoanalysis are cheering. But, unless intellectual standards are being held up, within the foreseeable future psychoanalysis will have been yet another therapy, another discredited "science" like Newtonian physics or Althusserian Marxism. Apparently Freud was correct in predicting that he had brought us the plague.

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VICTOR NEKRASOV

Forty Years Later

May 7, 1981
Jerusalem

Anniversaries abound as I write these painful lines in 1981. Had they lived this long, Pablo Picasso, Stefan Zweig, the Russian ballet star Anna Pavlova, and "the great red officer" K. K. Voroshilov would be one hundred years old. And so would my Aunt S. N. Motovilova. My Aunt Sonya, although never famous, was afraid of no one, speaking out with Korolenko-like defiance against all lawless acts. Forty years ago the Great Patriotic War broke out. In the West it is known as World War II, the war against Fascism, or, to use *L'Humanite*'s term, the Great International War.

My novel, *Frontline Stalingrad,* is also observing its thirty-fifth anniversary. To be precise, it first appeared in 1946, in the August, September, and October issues of the magazine *Znamya*. Some literary functionaries found the title blasphemous, and in subsequent editions the book was changed from a novel to a novella, while the title was altered to the less ideologically loaded *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (Stalingrad being a kind of symbol for the big man). The author, a newcomer to the fine points of socialist realism, accepted this, his first setback, with surprise and courage.

The very appearance of the book at the time was incredible and unprecedented. The literary establishment was taken aback. A book about the war and Stalingrad written by a simple officer and not a professional writer? Without a single reference to the Party and only three lines about Stalin? It defied categorization. Yet the authoritative journal *Znamya,* and its legendary editor Vishnevsky, had published it. Vishnevsky, after all, was one of the most experienced members of the Writers' Union, tuned into everything and completely aware of what was and was not politically acceptable. The book triggered an avalanche of articles and polemics. "True, it is a realistic portrayal written by an actual participant, but it lacks breadth and depth . . . as if viewed from a

Editor's Note: This essay is a slightly abridged version of the original, first published in an anthology of Victor Nekrasov's writing by Posev Verlag in 1981.

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trench. The author cannot see beyond his parapet." Thus wrote Alexander Fadeev, Secretary General of the Writers' Union. His remarks did not, to be fair, prevent the Secretariat or the Presidium, at whose meeting he spoke, from admitting the author to the Writers' Union, an unprecedented event.

A year later, the same Fadeev, Chairman of the Stalin Prize Committee, struck the author's name from the list of candidates which had been sent for Stalin's consideration. But God's ways are inexplicable. The next morning the author saw his picture in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. (Vishnevsky later conceded to the author, in private, after closing his office door as a precaution, "Only the big man himself could have given the signal. No one else," and waved his hands in a gesture of powerlessness.)

From that day on, the book was held up as a model. All of the publishing houses began printing and reprinting it non-stop. Translations appeared in every conceivable language. Critics praised it *ad infinitum,* forgetting that only a short while before the author had been accused of pacifism and Remarquism. A decade later, the film "Soldiers," based on the book, was shot. It, too, was destined to have a complicated fate. Today, the book has been banned in the USSR, blacklisted, and removed from all libraries; it is said that only in Lefortovo Prison does a copy still exist. The film, which suffered a fate of its own, is occasionally shown on military holidays such as Red Army Day and Victory Over Germany Day.

Forty years have thus elapsed since the war broke out. And thirty-five from the moment that the last sentence in the manuscript at the time it was called *On Earth's Edge,* was finished. That day the author ran to Elena Petrovna, a typist he knew, and began dictating the text page by page. The author, or rather I, was thirty-five at the time. I am now seventy. Half my life before the book. And half my life after.

The first half consisted of childhood, adolescence, and youth. I was basically apolitical, although early in life I got used to reading newspapers, primarily *Proletarskaya Pravda*. During the civil war I rooted for the White Army generals Deniken, Kolchak, and Wrangel. As a thirteen-year-old boy, in 1924, while stamping my feet against the cold on the Kreshchatik to the blasts of factor sirens, my ears were frostbitten – Lenin had died.

I never joined either the Pioneers or the Komsomol; I could not take them or Soviet power seriously. All of my close friends at trade school and college thought likewise. We did our best to get out of political lectures, dialectical materialism, and civics. When they really put

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pressure on us, we would chew over the latest Party directives before forgetting them completely and running off to the beach. Of what was taking place in the countryside – collectivization, the thirties purges – we heard only very indirectly, although we occasionally caught glimpses of carts with bodies piled up in them.

Youth, infatuation with girls, architecture, theater. At various stages I wanted to be Le Corbusier, Stanislavsky, and if worse came to worse, Mikhail Chekhov. What's more, we all wrote a bit on the side. We would meet at Serezha Domanski's bachelor apartment on Trekhsvyatitelskaya Street where, to convey a sense of mystery, we would light a candle on a round black table. There we read aloud our brilliant "opuses," a mixture of Hemingway and Hamsun. Meanwhile, outside the house, one socialist triumph after another was being proclaimed – we heard about the Soviet icebreaker navigators who crossed the North Pole, Chelyuskin, Papanits, Krasin, and Malygin; about the stratosphere, about the flights to the Far East and the North Pole made by the Soviet pilot Chkalov. On the screen we saw films about the battleship *Potemkin,* General Chapaev, and Maxim Gorky.

Somehow, miraculously, we survived 1937. It's an enigma. My parents, after all, were from the old nobility. The same fearless Aunt Sonya wrote streams of letters to Lenin's wife Krupskaya and to the Communist literary critics Nogin and Bonch-Burevich, protesting the illegal arrests. Another aunt who lived in Switzerland kept up an active correspondence with us, even sending us money via Torgsin, the International Trade Agency. Yet none of us was ever called in by the police. The only family member to be imprisoned was a wealthy uncle in Mirgorod. I have no way of explaining it. Perhaps it was becaues we housed some Cheka officers. They lived in one of our shrunken apartment's rooms. Mother attended to their medical needs, as well as to their children's.

Thus passed my youth. I graduated from a drama school. I worked in a semi-legal, bohemian, leftist theater. I must have explored every back alley in Kiev, Zhitomir and Vinitsky. Then I had third-rate roles in Vladivostok and Kirov – real theaters. I even fooled around with decoration. At night I tried my hand at writing. I submitted the manuscripts to journals. They sent them straight back to me – fortunately.

My last theater job was in Rostov, in the Red Army theater. There I was inducted into the army; the war had begun. Stalingrad. Donets. A wound. A hospital in Baku. A second wound, this time in Lublin, in Poland. Kiev regional hospital. My right hand was paralyzed, the bullet having pierced the nerve.

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"You must accustom the fingers in your right hand to little movements," said the doctor in charge, named Shpav. "Do you have a favorite girlfriend? Write to her every day. With the right hand, not with the left. It's good exercise."

I did not have a favorite girlfriend. And so, perched on the hillside below the hospital overlooking the Red stadium, I began to write about Stalingrad while it was still fresh.

The day when I turned thirty-five and the first half of my life (as of today) had already elapsed, the book's galleys were ready. Virtually nothing was changed except for the ending which had been expanded for the sake of "compositional completeness." The sacred text had already been looked over by Tvardovsky, *Novy Mir*'s editor, who recommended that it be published. It had been given to him by Vladimir Borisovich Alexandrov, the critic and eccentric who bent everyone's ear saying, "An ordinary soldier from the front line who doesn't have a clue about socialist realism. You must read it."

That's right, I didn't have a clue. I had read and worshiped Eric Remarque, and of course, Hemingway – everybody raved about him. Before that Knut Hamsun, and the first war book I came across, *Sebastopol Stories*. Period. And then the war began.

Here we come to the main point, the reason I am writing this postscript. This horrible meat-grinder of a war, which cost so many lives, began with the "insiders" attack, after Stalin's ten-day binge (or depression); was followed by the tragic retreat and senseless loss of life; and ended with the Red flag flying from the Reichstag. These years were, for my generation, a brutal coming of age. And this was as true for a semi-literate peasant from the Altai region as for an urban sophisticate, a total misfit in the army, who wrote stories about his experiences which no one needed.

While marching from Rostov to the Volga, our sapper brigade stopped in a remote village named Puchig and began, on a sloping hill, to dig through the frozen soil with collective farm shovels. None of the officers had ever laid eyes on a mine, a detonator, or a Bickford fuse. We knew only that tolite looked like soap and dynamite like jelly. We had no weapons and did not know how to shoot. Each soldier received ammunition for one live shooting all winter; there were barely enough cartridges for the soldiers on the front.

In the spring of '42 the detachment was dispatched to the Crimea, where it would bury many of its own. The officer corps was sent to

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Donets as an engineers' unit in the active army. As before, there were no weapons. Our sharpshooter brigade from Serafimovich trained with sticks rather than rifles on our shoulders. The artillery used logs on wheels from the carts. Only two practice rifles existed, and instructors carried them triumphantly on both sides of the banner during parades. We boldly muttered "forward" as we picked up the pace. The old ladies would sob "Our boys are going off to fight the Germans with sticks." Thinking of that spectacle, I am today still amazed.

We went into an advanced detachment right after the Barbarosa plan, receiving our weapons the day before going into battle. The soldiers were issued Mosinov rifles, 1891 model; the officers got Soviet-era TT pistols. Neither had ever held them before. They had tried to practice by shooting at ravens but were told not to as the advanced detachment was supposedly nearby. The "advance into battle" turned into an all-out retreat. In the morning the Yunker 88s dropped their bombs, followed by Messerschmitts. Then tanks headed our way. We lay in bushes on the perimeter. I ordered, "Run to the grove one by one!" and bounded after the others, putting the great Finnish runner Paavo Murmi to shame.

Thus began "my" war. It ended in July of 1944 in Lublin when a German sniper's bullet, shot from a roof on Krakow Street, shattered my shoulder bone. Within half a year I was demobilized and began to wear the title "Invalid of the Great Patriotic War, Category II." I started to receive a pension. All that remained was to move the flags on the big German map of Europe which hung in a conspicuous spot on the wall. May 9th, 1945, we all got drunk, kissed and hugged each other, and shot our guns, those of us who still had them, into the air, before running after more vodka. Our cause is just! The enemy will be defeated! Victory will be ours! The predictions of the stammering Molotov – hard-ass Vyacheslav, otherwise known as "Ram Head" in high school – came true that unforgettable spring day four years later.

We had won. Fascism, the most horrible force on earth, had been crushed. Mussolini was hanged by his feet, Hitler had committed suicide. A month later the black and red banners with medals and swastikas lay at the victor's feet. The great Stalin would smile from the mausoleum. Victors, alas, are not judged. We forgave Stalin everything: collectivization; 1937; his ruthless extermination of his old comrades; his dysfunctional behavior during the first days of the attack. After all, he knew by then the strength of the people who had believed in him: that he could no longer trick them; that only the harsh truth could unite the people; and that it was no longer possible to return to the bloodletting of the past. And we educated youngsters, who had become soldiers, bought his

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story completely, joining the ranks of the party of Lenin and Stalin with the purest of motives. This I believed wholeheartedly, that the Red Army had brought peace and freedom to the world, when on the hillside next to the Red stadium I penned with half-paralyzed fingers in a school notebook, "The order to retreat always comes unexpectedly."

Thirty-six years ago, that was the way I really thought. I longed for my fellow soldiers, those young "birch boys," and my officer friends (although I missed the big brass less). And I wanted everyone to love my Red Army, the liberator. It had earned their love by dint of blood, sweat, wounds, and graves. . . . And what of Stalin, the great Commander-in-Chief?

In early 1947, when *In the Trenches* had been submitted to *Soviet Writer,* before it was awarded the Stalin Prize, I was called in by a censor, a unique event. She looked at me reproachfully and said, "You've written a good book. But how can you have discussed Stalingrad without mentioning Comrade Stalin? It's unsettling. The inspirer and organizer of all our victors, and you leave him out? Can't you add a scene in Stalin's office? Just one or two pages?"

I played dumb: "I'm not a writer; I just wrote about what I saw and lived through. I can't just make things up. Believe me, it wouldn't be any good."

We parted on that note. Ten years later, in the wake of the Twentieth Party Congress, the director of Voenizdat, the military publishing house, called me into his office and asked me, almost in tears, to delete the three lines in my book where the officers talk about Stalin. I refused. But not out of any love for Stalin. Yet this is what I hear from the West: "You fought for Stalin. You charged into battle, your voice straining as you shouted 'for the Motherland and for Stalin.' You defended the most horrible system on earth, one which was arguably worse than Hitler's, and to what end?"

Well, I would reply, we fought at the time not so much for someone as against an intruder. An enemy had invaded our country, and we had to repulse him, to destroy him. Or rather, anyone who wore that despicable uniform and "God is with us" on his epaulets. I am not in a position to judge the Vlasovites who joined the German army following their Russian general; I never came across them and know little about them. But I can assure you that had we run into them, we would have killed them. As for what would come out of all this, we didn't know. None of us could begin to imagine.

My arm in a sling, I wandered about newly-liberated Lublin and found only smiling people everywhere. People invited me to their houses,

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gave me food to eat, and poured me drinks. Lord knows how much of the potent Polish moonshine, *bimber,* we consumed. Those were happy times. Today I would not dare stick my nose in the door, speaking Russian, in either Warsaw or Lublin. Nor in Prague. Yet at the time everyone was smiling as they stared at my epaulets and filled me up with if not *bimber,* then with the heady Czech beer. I do not know what or with whom Russian officers stationed in "fraternal" Poland drink today. I haven't a clue as to what they think and talk about, as they slosh down the customary half-liter of vodka. But I am confident that they will never be the Poles' drinking partners.

Today, I have an Afghan friend who fled from his country. He studied for ten years in Moscow, got a graduate degree there, befriended Russians, and came to love them and even sang with them, "May mother and the sun alway exist." But now, he remarked bitterly, these same Russians kill our mothers and blot out the sun. Everyone hates Russians, without exception. In the past they loved them. Listening to this, your blood curdles. The "birch boy," the innocent Russian stripling, has become an occupier. He coats a village with napalm, destroying people's eyesight. My friend's eight-year-old daughter has undergone treatment for some time. They sprayed a school and then announced that the victims had been marauders. The "birch boy" sows death everywhere, without even crawling out of his tank, chucks tiny mines in the shapes of wristwatches and toys from his helicopter. The mines do not kill but they maim. And at night the "birch boys" pillage stores, look for cigarettes, and trade AK-47s for hashish. That's right, hashish. The great "birch boy" is now a drug addict; alcohol doesn't get the job done any more. And he is always hungry, wants to eat.

We underestimate the power of Soviet propaganda, the hypnotic effect of newsprint. No one believes anything anymore, but the lies envelop you, creeping into your bloodstream. Nineteen-year-old Vanka, wearing a starred army cap, really believed that the Americans and the "slant-eyes" coveted our neighbors. Later, when he has seen a thing or two, he turns into a nasty, hungry animal, trading his machine gun for hashish, after he has used it as a weapon. Against whom? Who knows? They give the orders, and he shoots. Prisoners are not taken in Afghanistan, they are shot. By both sides. Which is why no one surrenders.

We did not suffer from such ambiguity. We knew who our enemy was, that he was cruel and strong, and that he had attacked our country.

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The Vanka of my day, who at the same age wore a star on his cap, froze in trenches and leaped into battle, even though his father had perhaps been punished for being a *kulak*. He didn't know that only a few years before we had seized the Baltics, or maybe he had forgotten. He just defended his country.

Three hundred thousand prisoners passed through our hands in Stalingrad. I personally handled several hundred "transistors." Of course, we accumulated in our dugouts quite a horde of watches, pens, and cameras. But generally we did not ask prisoners to turn over photo albums with snapshots of blue-eyed Gretchen or Mom and Dad. A soldier muttered, "Danke schon, Danke schon," and pulled a pocket watch out of his pants for me. I wore it for some time after the war. Watches, to say nothing of cameras, were a rarity for a Soviet officer.

Three years later, in Germany, it was different. I was not there. I did not see it with my own eyes, but I read about it. A down-like blanket covered the sky, and no women were left in the country. Vanka was given free reign to loot the homes of the well-to-do; Stalin unambiguously gave orders to pillage the country. The victor's prerogative, as history attests. Then came the order to punish and even to execute people. Now our Vanka, the occupier of the people's democracies, sits in barracks, drinks, and awaits his orders. The officers drink, too. It's a different matter altogether, as someone will no doubt write about someday. Bu that is now. Let us go back to the trenches of Stalingrad.

I often hear, "Many consider that you wrote the first truthful book about the war. Did you tell the whole truth? Or was something hidden which they removed? If you were to sit down and write the book again, this time with your hands untied, would you produce the same work?"

Let me start with the last point. I would not change a thing. Books like mine are written in an extended burst of energy, right after the event. It took me less than a half a year to complete, without excessive effort. As for the requirements of socialist realism, Vladimir Borisovich Alexandrov was right; I didn't have the foggiest. I expected the scenes about the retreat to meet with a cold response. But they did not; only one of the collaborators at the journal viewed them negatively. As for the Party's role, I never gave it much thought while I was writing the book. Vishnevsky never pressured me. It is true that his assistant, Tolya Tarasenkov, scratched his neck. "Hmm," he said, "If only the word 'Communist' appeared in your book at least once. Can it be that there was no decent Party representative in your battalion?"

"The commandar of the battalion, Major Mitilev. A spineless character of a commissar. Abrosimov. He has another name. You know how it

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is. . . ."

"And in the ranks?"

"Senechka, the agitator, a decent guy."

"How did you leave him out?"

And so that was how Senechka, until then my oversight, got into the novel. There were other, minor corrections, largely in the passages dealing with vodka.

So much for the demands and corrections in the magazine. More changes, and substantive ones, were made to the book edition. The sentence, "And may he lead us to victory," referring to Stalin, was added despite strenuous opposition from me. The vetern infighters eventually had their way. As for the truth, is everything in the book truthful? Basically, yes, or at least ninety-nine percent. I kept quiet about the other one percent. The novel was written some time ago, by someone who, back then at least, knew something about the military. But he didn't have an inkling of what lay in store for him. He did not know, for instance, that as a freshly-minted member of the Writers' Union, he had to fight and assert; to edify and illuminate; that his writing was a veritable weapon; or that he was to be the first to help and to sing paeans to the cause.

Soviet literature, the most progressive in the world, is always in a state of mobilization, always preparing for war. In my thirty-year experience in the ranks of the great Writers' Union, I cannot recall a day when we were not fighting against something: bourgeois nationalism; great power chauvinism; cosmopolitanism; sycophancy; lack of conflict; praising of the gray past; isolation from current issues; underestimation of the working class; and, of course, alcoholism. A battle against the last is always being waged, day and night, in one's personal life and career. This is where I got in the most trouble. Even Tvardovsky, editor of the liberal *Novy Mir,* whose drinking binges were legendary, splashed vodka out of my characters' glasses and replaced it with beer.

The Soviet writer's weapon is always ready for combat, always primed and never rusty. The powder kegs are full and dry. Even so, the writer who is beholden to the exacting reader – the point is emphasized at every Party plenum and congress – can never be prepared enough. He is superficial, having at times let something escape his view. Here the editor comes to his rescue. He always knows where, in the endless skirmishes, to shoot, and he provides the right weapon at the proper moment. He takes the rudder out of the writer's hand as the ship is capsizing and positions the sail so that it benefits from the correct wind. The editor receives appropriate recompense for his advice, tips, and naviga-

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tional skills. The wise writer does as he is told, and everything goes as smoothly as butter – large print runs for his books, a place in the Ogonek Library, even prizes and trips abroad.

For better or worse, not all writers are wise, but all editors take their cues from above. I had the good fortune to work with them. They were smart and cunning, brave and careful when necessary. In short, they had mastered the fine points of fencing and tightrope-walking. I am indebted to them for showing me, if not the first, then the second and subsequent steps on the path leading to the literary Olympus. I did not make it to the summit, officially recognized and endorsed, with limousines and velvet rugs, and a special elevator entrance. I was knocked off the path. But that is another subject.

Half my life before the book. Half my life after. Time to take stock. Thirty years in the Communist Party, the cruelest, most cowardly, unprincipled, and corrupt in the world. I believed in it, joined it, and toward the end of my tenure, came to hate it. Three years in the army, during its most difficult moments. I loved it and was proud of its victories. I will always glorify the perpetually grumbling rank-and-file combatant (only later did he come to be known as a soldier). He has nothing to do with the faces that appeared on the posters in the Tiergarten in Berlin. One was quiet, confident, wearing the helmet we actually never wore; the other, in puttees that were falling off, grouchy, cursing his superior more than the Germans after having plowed across half of Europe and scampered up the Reichstag. I knew the two soldiers portrayed on the posters, Egorov and Kantary. "We lucked out in every way," they conceded while downing shots of vodka. "There were at least ten or twelve groups like ours, but we had the good fortune to get there first and to hoist the red star."

I will close this messy jumble of reminiscences, contradictions, and emotions. Such is (or was, but old habits die hard) the Soviet writer's responsibility to the demanding, penetrating reader that I will try to fulfill my obligation. I am often asked in Paris, "What will you do when the red-starred Soviet tanks appear on the Place de la Concorde?"

"I will have a drink with the first tank driver I come across."

"Well, and then what will you do?"

"Then we will sober up together."

Humorless people react to this with hostility, but jokes aside, I do not, for one thing, believe that tanks will ever appear on the Place de la Concorde. No one is more spineless than the Soviet leadership. Truman pounded his fist, and Stalin (even Stalin) immediately withdrew his

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troops from Iranian Azerbaijan. When Kennedy showed some resolve, Khrushchev pulled the rockets out of Cuba. . . .

When we flew over the Mamaevsky cemetery on return from a mission, hedge-hopping in a bullet-riddled plane, our hearts would beat with pride when we spotted the red stars below. We were even proud of the star on our army caps. Now it drips with shame, having become for the Afghans what the spidery swastika was for us, a symbol of enslavement.

Will I ever have that shot of vodka with the Soviet tank driver? Certainly not on the Place de la Concorde – he will never make it there. Without the capitalist world (American credits, Canadian wheat, Argentine meat, Finnish eggs, French chickens), our developed socialism would be finished overnight. Perhaps I will meet him somewhere else, who knows where, and I'll have that drink with him. He will tell me . . . but what can he say? A photograph which appeared in magazines all over the world hangs from my bookshelf in Paris. It shows a young Soviet tank driver in Prague, in the unforgettable year of 1968. He is smoking a cigarette in his tank turret while looking at this unfamiliar, foreign city, glancing at the people whom he has come to liberate, or defend, or punish. His boyish forehead is wrinkled, and his expression suggests only bewilderment, uncertainty, and a deeply disturbing thought. *Why am I here? To do what?*

In 1952, *For a Just Cause,* Vassily Grossman's novel about the battle for Stalingrad and the war, appeared. Were he alive today, he would shudder from the very title. Vasily Semyonovich was smart, even wise; he knew a lot more than the rest of us and wrote an utterly truthful book. Yet even he believed that he had fought for a just cause.

The enemy will be defeated! Victory will be ours! But our cause turned out not to be so just. Which is the great tragedy of my generation. And of myself as well.

Translated from the Russian by Charles Allen

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MORRIS DICKSTEIN

Depression Culture: The Dream of Mobility

Like the turbulent sixties, the 1930s belong not only to history but to myth and legend. For many the period remains a byword for economic crisis, a permanent warning of what could happen again. For the resurgent right it represents the beginning of the hated welfare state. For others, who of course were young then, it remains the time of their lives, a period of remarkable political excitement and cultural buoyancy intimately connected with the social stresses of the times. The 1929 Crash was on everyone's mind when stocks plummeted in the fall of 1987; it remained an unspoken fear during the long, intractable recession that began in 1989 and lasted through the early '90s, leaving many without jobs and with diminished hopes. Fears of both recession and inflation have become a constant in American thinking. In recent years we've witnessed the contraction not only of American industry but of the old sense of unlimited possibility: the career open to talents, the promise of American life. My concern here is not with jobs but with the state of mind that goes with lower economic horizons.

The mood of the Depression was marked not only by hard times and a coming world crisis but by all the attempts to cheer people up – or else to sober them up to face what was happening. Though poor economically, the decade was rich in both popular fantasy and trenchant social criticism. This is a fundamental split of Depression culture: on one hand, the widespread effort by writers and thinkers to grapple with unprecedented economic disaster, to explain and understand it; on the other hand, the need reflected in the popular culture to produce art and entertainment that would distract people from their trouble, which became another way of coming to terms with it.

Thanks to the intersection of new technology and deep human needs, the thirties proved to be a turning point in American popular culture. Radio came of age, binding audiences together with common distractions that matched their anxieties. Photography, photojournalism, and newsreels provided the visual images that even those great radio voices – H.V. Kaltenborn from Spain, Edward R. Murrow from London, Orson Welles from Mars – could not convey. This was also the era that saw the consolidation of the Hollywood studio system and the

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classical style of American sound films. The great movie genres of the thirties – the gangster movie, the horror film, the screwball comedy, the dance musical, the road movie, the social-consciousness drama, the animated cartoon – have shown enduring vitality. They still influence the way our movies are made, while the films themselves evoke nostalgia or affectionate imitation.

Woody Allen's clever movie *The Purple Rose of Cairo,* a pastiche of Depression cliches, lovingly portrays the Janus-faced culture of the era. Mia Farrow appears as a waitress in a jerkwater town who lives out her fantasies by going to the movies, while Danny Aiello plays her unemployed husband, a blue-collar lout who belongs to the drab and boring life she's trying to forget. Jeff Daniels plays a character who literally steps off the screen to add a little magic and romance to her pinched world.

If you look at the movie within the movie, the film she keeps going back to see, you encounter Woody Allen's version of the fantasy itself. We get glimpses of wealthy, frivolous idlers making silly banter on movie-sets designed to look like cavernous living rooms, glitzy nightclubs, or Egyptian tombs. Such cheesy but exotic settings parody the famous Depression idea of the careless rich living a life of pure swank and style. But the movie also shows us the other side of the story: the small town so idle and empty it looks like a picture postcard; the husband out of work, supported by a waif-like wife as he hangs out with the boys; the movie theater as the scene of communal daydreaming where ordinary people feed on escapist images of wealth, adventure, and romance.

Woody Allen was a master at manipulating movie clichés, simplifying them, satirizing them, infusing them (as Chaplin did) with his own kind of little-man pathos. Dennis Potter did the same thing for the English common man, Depression-style, in his wildly original series *Pennies From Heaven.* Bob Hoskins plays a sheet-music salesman with a bossy, repressed wife and a shy, dreamy love for the music and lyrics that light up his gray, constricted world. They are his romantic outlet as he lip-synchs his feelings to the incongruous sound of the old recordings. He looks longingly to America as the place the best songs come from, but also as the fantasy land where those songs come true.

Psychological studies of the Depression have shown how economic problems were complicated by emotional problems, since the stress of hard times, no matter how impersonal their origin, undercut their victims' feelings of confidence, self-worth, even their sense of reality. The psychological pain was exacerbated by the American ethic of self-help and individualism, remnants of a frontier mentality – the same dream of success, dignity, and opportunity that had inspired immigrants, freed slaves

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and natives alike. This made people feel responsible when their lives ran downhill. *Purple Rose* and even *Pennies From Heaven* are stories about fighting off depression, in every sense of the word.

It can be argued that more people during the thirties, especially the poor, lived vicariously by turning on the radio than by going to the movies. (The movie audience actually peaked in 1946, shortly before the advent of television.) Woody Allen complemented his picture of the Depression in *Purple Rose* with his more autobiographical treatment of a noisy Jewish family in Brooklyn in *Radio Days,* a tribute to the role radio had played in melding a larger community out of an ethnic stew. The nightly fifteen-minute dose of the tribulations of Amos 'n Andy, which was often piped into theaters, propelled traditional dialect humor onto a national stage. New York's mayor, the inimitable Fiorello LaGuardia, read the comic strips over the radio on Sunday mornings. Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chats gave people a feeling of intimate connection with their more activist government; radio, by intervening pervasively in people's lives, thus became the electronic equivalent of the New Deal.

"Amos 'n Andy" was an ongoing epic of daily life, setting off the practical man against the quixotic dreamer whose schemes, especially money-making schemes, were always going awry. Behind the laugh lines it was a story about ordinary people trying to get by. This was typical of Depression "escapism": reflecting deeply felt concerns yet also containing them, spinning out problems to show they could be worked out. This was not so different from the way Roosevelt himself, despite his patrician tones, put a warm human spin on the news of the world. He spoke with authority but also simply, directly, as if to each listener individually. By showing he cared, he fostered new hope after the deepening despair of the Hoover years. While forwarding the new federal role, he reaffirmed traditional values.

But the myth of the thirties was far more than its movie images and radio sounds. A battalion of gifted photographers helped create an indelible iconography that we still associate with hard times. Everyone recalls the famous urban images of apple-sellers and their pushcarts, the Southern chain gangs and haggard but dignified sharecroppers. Epic scenes from the Dust Bowl are part of our permanent shorthand for rural poverty and natural desolation. Much that we know about the human spirit in adversity can still be found in Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother," the great 1936 photograph of a woman whose brow is furrowed like tractored-out land, with a look on her face more pensive and distant than pained or troubled. Two children, with their backs to

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the camera, have nuzzled into her shoulders, and the bony fingers at her chin seemed to extend from some armature sculpted to support the weight of her head. Like other Lange photographs of migrants, she is all angles, a zig-zag of intersecting lines. She has a look of entrapment, of someone with her back to the wall. Anxious but reserved and self-contained, she speaks to our humanity without soliciting our sympathy.

As we look back at it today, the Depression is a study in contrasts. At one extreme, the 'look' of the thirties is in the flowing Art Deco lines of the new Chrysler Building, the Radio City Music Hall, the sets of Astaire-Rogers musicals like *Top Hat, Swing Time,* and *Shall We Dance*. At the other end is the work done by photographers like Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, and Ben Shahn for Roy Stryker's photography unit of the Farm Security Administration, conceived as a way of bringing home the unthinkable pain of rural poverty to urban Americans. If the FSA photographs give us the naturalistic art of the Depression at its most humane, the Astaire musicals convey an elegant, sophisticated world in which the Depression is barely a distant rumor. Yet both are equally characteristic of the period.

In his fine book *Documentary Expression and Thirties America,* William Stott described how the government, business leaders, and even economists suppressed or sweetened the unpleasant facts during the early years of the Depression. Until *Fortune* published an article in September 1932 called "No One Has Starved," mainstream newspapers, magazines, and radio programs down-played or ignored the Depression and portrayed the country, as Hoover himself did, in business-as-usual terms.

This virtual blackout gave impetus to the documentary movement, to radical journalism, and to a few independent films like King Vidor's utopian pastoral fable *Our Daily Bread* (1934), which shows the old American individualism giving way to the sense of community on a Russian-style collective farm. A few years later, an upbeat *Life* magazine, founded in 1936 as the vehicle for a new photojournalism, complained that "depressions are hard to see because they consist of things not happening, of business not being done." Needless to say, *Life* published none of the stomach-churning pictures of rural misery taken by its star photographer, Margaret Bourke-White, in 1936 and 1937. They appeared instead in a book she wrote with Erskine Caldwell, *You Have Seen Their Faces,* whose accusing title reminds us that a great deal of suffering, poverty, and unemployment was invisible, except to those who cared to look at it.

Trying to grasp the essential spirit of the thirties would seem to be a hopeless task. How can one era have produced both Woody Guthrie

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and Rudy Vallee, both the Rockettes high-stepping at the Radio City Music Hall and the Okies on their desperate trek towards the pastures of plenty in California? To readers of journalist Eugene Lyons' 1941 best-seller it was the "Red Decade." Revisionist historians like Warren Susman and Loren Baritz countered by drawing attention to the conservative heartland of the middle class, with its deep economic fears yet also its interest in sports, mystery novels, self-improvement, and mass entertainment. Some historians like Daniel Aaron, James B. Gilbert, and Richard Pells focused on the intellectual history of the thirties, analyzing the radicalism of the era in terms that reach back to prewar socialism and progressivism. Other writers in the popular tradition of *Only Yesterday* and *Middletown* concentrate on the social history of everyday life. Still others like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. center on the administrative and political history of the New Deal and the dramatic figure of Roosevelt himself, whose dominating presence became a force of mythic proportions. Most recently, younger students of the thirties have re-examined the radical left, especially the unsung role of women like Josephine Herbst, Tillie Olsen, and Meridel Le Sueur in bringing gender concerns, family histories, and deep personal emotions into the fiction and journalism of the era. Much less convincingly, a few scholars have excavated and defended the proletarian writing of the 1930s, in part because they feel it has been unjustly neglected but more because they identify with its political program.

When I was in college in the late 1950s, the thirties appeared to us in the hazy distance as a golden age when writers, artists, and intellectuals developed strong political commitments and enlisted literature on the side of the poor and the destitute. We were able to mythologize the thirties because we never read most of what was written then. (Most of it was long out of print.) We hated the blandness and repressive limits of the political culture of the fifties, and looked back wistfully at the excited ideological climate of the thirties, about which we knew next to nothing.

Years later, when I finally looked into some of the ideological debates of the thirties, whose radical intensity I had admired from afar, I was horrified by the mean-spirited brutality of many sectarian polemics, which seemed more concerned with doctrinal purity than with advancing any real social change. For all their dialectical ingenuity, they were deaf to the free play of ideas, and breathed an atmosphere of personal aggression and fundamentalist dogma.

Yet this was also a period when writers as well as photographers keenly pursued an interest in the backwaters of American life: the travail

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of the immigrant, the slum, and the ghetto, the failures of the American dream, above all the persistence of poverty and inequality amid plenty – a subject with few parallels in earlier American literature.

One attempt to grapple directly with social reality was the proletarian novel, a middle-class experiment in creating militant, revolutionary fiction about the working class. Many of these novels centered on industrial conflict. At least six of them dealt with the same strike in the cotton mills of Gastonia, North Carolina, in 1929. These writers reshaped journalistic material into ideological fables. In this they were encouraged by the Communist Party, which in the early thirties saw literature as a weapon, a way of fostering class consciousness. Debates on proletarian writing proliferated in left-wing journals in the early 1930s, with some critics discounting books (like *Call It Sleep*) that merely focused on working-class life without stressing its revolutionary potential.

The standard view of proletarian novels used to be that of Malcolm Cowley, who drew a composite sketch of their plots as follows:

> A young man comes down from the hills to work in a cotton mill (or a veneer factory or a Harlan County mine). Like all his fellow workers except one, he is innocent of ideas about labor unions or the class struggle. The exception is always an older man, tough but humorous, who keeps quoting passages from *The Communist Manifesto*. Always the workers are heartlessly oppressed, always they go out on strike, always they form a union with the older man as leader, and always the strike is broken by force of arms. The older man dies for the cause, like John the Baptist, but the young hero takes over his faith and mission.

Described in this reductive and amusing way, the novels seem even more pat than they actually were. Partly inspired by Soviet experiments in proletarian art, these books have never fared very well with readers or critics. By 1939, *Partisan Review* editor Philip Rahv, once a theorist of proletarian writing, could dismiss the whole episode as "the literature of a party disguised as the literature of a class." Yet proletarian writing was part of a much broader tradition of fiction and poetry in the thirties and forties. Many key works of Depression journalism and social documentation resemble proletarian fiction, which also overlaps with mainstream social novels like *Studs Lonigan* and *U.S.A.* that have few working-class characters and no simple conversion fable. There are also strong similarities between proletarian fiction and the thirties road novel, as well as the hard-boiled crime fiction of writers like James M. Cain and W. R.

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Burnett and their ubiquitous Hollywood progeny. Stylistically, they all came out of Hemingway's sleeve.

Malcolm Cowley boiled proletarian fiction down to a simple formula by confining himself to a handful of works that fit that pattern. If most of the strike novels seem thin and ideological today, indeed barely readable, there remains a grittier, tougher kind of 'proletarian' novel than Cowley's; Fiction dealing with what Edward Dahlberg called the "bottom dogs" of society, the *Ironweed*-style characters at the very base of the social ladder. Reading Dahlberg's novel *Bottom Dogs* not long before his death, D. H. Lawrence took note of the "mass of failure" that underlay America's "huge success." He was horrified and fascinated by what he took to be the latest wave of American primitivism, a brutal reduction of the human animal to "a willed minimum." "The next step," he prophesied, "is legal insanity, or just crime." Besides Dahlberg, this raw, grim vein of writing includes books like Edward Anderson's *Hungry Men* and Tom Kromer's Kafkaesque *Waiting For Nothing,* both republished and well received in the mid-1980s.

Nelson Algren was one of the best of these writers; Walter Rideout described his first novel, *Somebody in Boots,* as "fascinatingly hideous." It foreshadowed the work of later hardboiled pulp writers like Jim Thompson. But Algren was anything but to the manner born. Partly Jewish, partly Scandinavian in origin, his real name was Nelson Algren Abraham and he had been to both college and journalism school. For him, as for many others, becoming a writer meant taking to the road to see how the other half lived: riding boxcars, cadging meals, stopping in hobo jungles and Salvation Army soup kitchens, and learning which towns threw drifters in jail for vagrancy. Men and even children went on the road simply because there were no jobs, or because their families were disintegrating around them.

In later interviews Algren estimated that there were a million people out on the road in the early thirties. Falling into their world made him a writer. "The experience on the road gave me something to write about," he told H. E. F. Donohue. "You do see what it's like, what a man in shock who is dying looks like. He knows he's going to die, and he's shocked by the idea that he's dying. Or you're waiting for a boxcar and it seems to be going a little too fast and some kid makes a try for it and then you get the smell of blood and you go over and you see it sliced off his arm. . . . And all the tens of thousands of Americans literally milling around at that time trying to survive."

The road, says Algren, not only gave the young writer something to write about; it conditioned his attitude towards the larger society.

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"Everything I'd been told was wrong. That I see with my own eyes. I'd been told, I'd been assured that it was a strive and succeed world. What you did: you got yourself an education and a degree and then you went to work for a family newspaper and then you married a nice girl and raised children and this was what America was. But this was not what America was. America was not socialized and I resented very deeply that I'd been lied to." Certainly, Algren in his tough-guy manner may have romanticized his life on the road, like Jack London several decades earlier. Because it was based on experience, not formula, it became a truer kind of discovery than the contrived conversions we find in the strike novels.

The empathetic writer, burdened by middle-class guilt, was invariably radicalized by what he saw on the road, by his exposure to so many marginal and miserable people, the detritus of the American dream. While few women took to the road like Algren, they often had similar experiences in bread lines, on picket lines, or among the homeless. They got involved in the labor wars, witnessing factory lockouts and seeing goons beating up strikers to prevent unions from organizing. Writers moved back and forth between journalism and fiction or poetry. Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* emerged directly out of the wrenching articles he wrote for *The Nation* and the *San Francisco News* about the conditions of migrant labor. Often the writer became a Communist, or worked with the Communists, not because he or she was strongly political but simply because the Communists, especially at the local level, seemed the most committed to changing society and helping those at the bottom.

Writing in the thirties was in many ways an experiment in downward mobility. Only a few of the 'proletarian' authors, such as Jack Conroy and Tillie Olsen, actually came from the working class. Other felt ashamed of their own background and upbringing. Still others (like Algren) may have been seeking adventure and risk, in the style of Hemingway – then writing about it, also in Hemingway's style. (A number of writers followed Hemingway to Spain after 1936.) Though many middle-class or ethnic authors and filmmakers grew up in circumstances that were but one step above poverty, their education alone vaulted them into the ranks of the privileged. Yet many sloughed off the comforts of the middle class, for a time at least, to explore a way of life that seemed more emblematic of Depression America. In his book on the thirties, *Part of Our Time,* Murray Kempton pays tribute to "plebeian" writers like Farrell who came from the lower middle class but carried the freight of early poverty through their whole writing lives. He cites an

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epigraph that Farrell borrowed from Chekhov: "What writers belonging to the upper class have received from nature for nothing, plebeians acquire at the cost of their youth."

There was no doubt a comic side to this quest for the lower depths when so many were desperate to leave it behind. I am sure more writers nurtured their radicalism in the Hollywood hills than in riding the rails. As the Depression ended, Preston Sturges brilliantly satirized Hollywood's social conscience in *Sullivan's Travels* (1942) – by sending a frivolous director of inane comedies (played by Joel McCrea) out on the road looking for the poor, with an entourage of studio retainers following close behind. Instead of another edition of *Ants in Your Pants,* his usual kind of movie, McCrea wants to make a serious epic of social concern called *O Brother, Where Art Thou?,* though his thoughtful butler warns him that only "the morbid rich" have an interest in poverty, which is really a plague to be shunned at all cost.

At first the director's cushioned life and his absurd play-acting prevent him from making even superficial contact with the poor. (A limousine ferries him to where he can hop a freight train.) But then, in a series of circumstances that could happen only in a movie, he loses his memory, his identity, is given up for dead, gets railroaded by the judicial system somewhere in the South, and is propelled without appeal into a world of "real" suffering – that is, the chain-gang world of movies like *I Am a Fugitive,* with a chorus of black prisoners singing "Go Down, Moses." Sturges shifts from satirizing social-problem movies (and the shallow Hollywood types who make them) to re-enacting them in a setting of dream-like intensity. He traps his well-meaning director in just the kind of movie he wanted to make, a stylized world of arbitrary punishment and grim endurance. After merely slumming in social misery, he is swallowed up by it, with no life-line to his familiar world.

But the movie doesn't end here. Along with his fellow prisoners, Sullivan finds some momentary relief in watching cartoons about Mickey Mouse and Pluto. This is what the Depression audiences really needed, says Sturges: escape, light-hearted enjoyment. The point is pungently philistine and a trifle complacent: Sturges the comedy-director is telling us that it's laughter, not lower-depths sociology, that is the universal solvent. It's the entertainer, not the revolutionary, who has the common touch. Comedy eases the burden of the wretched of the earth, and unites the privileged artist for a brief moment with his suffering brother, that thirties myth, the common man. Yet *Sullivan's Travels,* though self-congratulatory, pays handsome tribute to the genre it satirizes and recreates, the lower-depths movie. Even for a comic artist, as Chaplin showed, the

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way down, into life's pratfalls and social embarrassments, was the way out.

The kinds of protest movies Sturges had in mind stretch from the Warner Brothers problem movies of the early thirties, such as *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* and *Wild Boys of the Road,* to the grand summation of the decade's social consciousness, John Ford's remarkably faithful 1940 adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Significantly, all three of these films are road movies, not about observers doing research on the poor but about ordinary people uprooted from a stable life, forced to wander in search of something better, only to find more hellish conditions among other displaced, unwanted, or viciously mistreated people. The social disintegration, violence, and human isolation in these films are akin to the atmosphere in the gritty gangster films from which they emerged (often made at the same studio, Warner Brothers).

Like some of the gangster films, *I Am a Fugitive* traces the roots of social turmoil back to the Great War, which had exposed the men who fought in it to violence and carnage but also to a wider world than the one they came from. Based on a controversial magazine serial that was turned into a novel, *I Am a Fugitive* shows us how James Allen (played by Paul Muni) returns from the war to confront a different world, and a family that can't understand what he's been through or how he's changed. This is exactly what happens in Hemingway's great story "Soldier's Home." Just as Hemingway's returning soldier, having seen what he's seen, can no longer summon up the will or purpose to do anything, Muni finds his old factory job too confining. After so much Army regimentation, he recoils at the rigid industrial routine. He doesn't want to be a "soldier of peace," a soldier of anything. He wants to be creative, an engineer who can work with his hands and build projections of his own dreams. Instead he's chained to a desk job he can do with his eyes closed. "I've changed . . . been through hell," he tries to explain.

So he leaves his steady job, crisscrosses the country, gradually becoming a hobo as he's unable to find work. He tries to pawn his war medals but the pawnshop already has a case full. The time-frame is vague but we're still in the early twenties, a relatively prosperous period. We soon understand that the film is projecting the social crisis of the Depression onto the earlier decade, thinking about the twenties in thirties terms: scarcity of work, a mobility born of ambition but soon fueled by desperation, the disruption of social bonds and promises embodied in the discarded medals, which speak to us of discarded values, dreams, and ideals.

Soon, caught up in another hobo's stick-up attempt, Muni is rail-

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roaded by a crude legal system into ten years on a chain gang. But what made the movie famous was something more visceral and concrete: the concentration-camp atmosphere of the prison barracks, the casual brutality of the overseers and the chain gang itself, the wasting away of a desperately sick prisoner who's still forced to work, the torture of the sweat-box and the inedible food, and the excruciating feat of the escape, from the removal of Muni's leg-irons with blows from a sledge-hammer to his flight through the swamps pursued by vicious armed guards with snarling dogs. These scenes have the sensory and social impact of the early Soviet films. Their memorable imagery would reappear in later films from *Sullivan's Travels* to *Cool-Hand Luke* and Jim Jarmusch's *Down By Law,* set in the Louisiana bayous. *I Am a Fugitive,* like Upton Sinclair's *Jungle* and Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath,* was one of those works that actually made a difference in the world, provoking violent controversy and leading to reform of the grotesque system of 'justice' it vividly exposed. But the really radical twist in the movie hasn't been fully understood.

After escaping north and reversing his two names, James Allen manages to invert his position in society as well. He gets the job in construction he's always wanted – a job that his work on the chain-gang had obscenely parodied – and between 1924 and 1929, in Chicago, under his new identity, he builds himself up into one of the upstanding citizens of the community. Blackmailed and eventually betrayed by a woman he's forced to marry, he returns voluntarily to the South, by agreement, to serve out a symbolic ninety-day sentence. But the unnamed state – actually Georgia – goes back on its word, subjects him to even more brutality than before, then refuses to release him at the promised time.

His only way out is another escape. Now, at top speed, all he did must be done again. But the frenzied, desperate, utterly disillusioned creature who flees this time is not the cocky, confident person who made it out before. And during the escape he loses the old man – the cynical realist who was stunned that he'd returned – who not only represents the only bit of humanity he's ever encountered on the chain gang, but is also the symbol of his own dwindling humanity and resilience.

Careening along in a truck-load of dynamite, James Allen has gone from being an unfairly victimized citizen, still resourceful and full of hope, to an explosive desperado hell-bent on freedom or self-destruction. Now there's no question of his putting his life together again, not just because of the Depression but because of his own depression. His self-assurance has crumbled with his trust. The man who was stupid enough to walk back into the chain gang now sees through everything: "The state's

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promise didn't mean anything. . . . Their crimes are worse than mine." The bedrock faith in the system, which brought him through the war, which survived impoverishment, injustice, and physical torture, has now disintegrated, leaving him a haunted and a haunting man.

The last lines of the movie are a famous exception to the Hollywood cult of the happy ending. James Allen appears in the shadows, a shadow himself, for a furtive goodbye to his second wife. "How do you live?" she asks him. A hollow, frightened voice hisses, "I steal." His crazed eyes tell us that his second escape, for all its reckless bravado, didn't really work. He is a wreck of a man, unable to function except as the criminal and fugitive he was falsely accused of being. Quite literally, society has made him what he is: a man who, in his half-demented, half-realistic fears, sees through society, sees the lie of its official values. The unusual title of the film, like the last line of dialogue, places this man in an ongoing, open-ended, unresolved present: I am a fugitive, I still am. He points a finger at us, for he is the homeless, shadowy outcast who haunts our world, whom we would all prefer to forget. The movie ends but his flight continues. It would be a long time before another American film would end on such a hopeless, accusing note.

I can't discuss in detail the other side of thirties culture, the supposedly escapist side. In contrast to proletarian novels, radical documentaries, and films like *I Am a Fugitive,* the popular arts in the thirties were legendary for their lightheartedness and frivolity. Sometimes the fun was anarchic in a way that bordered on savagery. From the first half of the decade, think of the zaniness of the Marx brothers and their scenarist, S. J. Perelman, the black humor fiction of Perelman's brother-in-law, Nathanael West, the snidely insinuating comedy of W. C. Fields and Mae West. At other times this popular culture was buoyant and sophisticated, as in the witty lyrics and clever patter songs of Cole Porter, Rogers and Hart, and the Gershwins, the screwball humor of the *Thin Man* series, *It Happened One Night,* and the many breakneck romantic comedies that followed. The same period that produced the histrionic Paul Muni, who clumped through *Scarface* like a childish, menacing oaf, also gave us as one of its icons the lean, lightfooted, whimsical figure of Fred Astaire, who embodied the grace and filigree of the era as definitively as Muni conveyed its heavy, brooding seriousness.

Thus the conventional picture we get from *The Purple Rose of Cairo* or even *Sullivan's Travels,* of people going to the movies or listening to the radio to escape their troubles – to daydream and fantasize – is seriously inadequate. The relation of the arts to the social mood was far

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more complex. A period's forms of escape, if they can be called escape, are as significant and revealing as its social criticism. Under the guise of mere entertainment, "Amos 'n Andy" transposed people's daily problems, especially money problems, into a different key and made them seem more manageable – interminable, perhaps, but manageable. The mass audience could identify even with black people in a period when everyone felt beset and beleaguered.

Immensely popular historical romances like *Gone With the Wind* and *Anthony Adverse* transported readers into different eras, such as the post-Civil War period in the ravaged South, which nevertheless had striking parallels to what they were experiencing in the Depression. The anarchic comedies of the early thirties, with their legendary speed, wit, sexiness, and irreverence, showed how our moral limits and social conventions had been undermined by the Depression. Finally, it's no accident that so many screwball comedies, stage musicals, and the Astaire-Rogers films are set in the world of the very rich, for that world had not only the money but the mobility that was denied to so many during the Depression.

This is the ultimate irony, that in a world where so many took to the road, so few had any real mobility. James Allen on his flight from the chain gang, a flight to nowhere, the men and boys hopping freights and pitching camp outside towns that didn't want them, the Joad family on its Biblical trek through town and desert, Hooverville and sanitary camp: this is not travel but a way of standing still or running in place. As Nicholas Lemann showed in *The Promised Land,* even the great black migration from the South slowed down; there were so few jobs to be found. Migrant workers like the Joads were grasping at survival, not reaching for freedom. This is one reason why photography became such a central mode of expression in the 1930s. The migrant pictures, with their sharp angles, their clashing lines, are all about going nowhere; the people are pinned like social specimens, frozen into postures which allow little movement, no escape.

On the other hand, the fantasy culture of the thirties is all about movement, not the desperate simulation of movement we find in the road stories, but movement that suggests genuine freedom. This was why, with Berkeley, with Astaire, with Balanchine and Martha Graham, choreography became as important as photography for this decade. The look of the great thirties musicals is everything that Lange's "Migrant Mother" or "Woman of the High Plains," so angular and static, are not. It's all circle and swirl, all movement and flow. Think of it: the rose-petal effect in Berkeley's big numbers, the sweepingly elegant curvature of the Deco sets, the brilliance of movement of Astaire and Rogers,

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locked together in breathtaking dips and turns, he in top hot, white tie, and tails, she in elaborate gowns that create rococo line-drawings in space.

Also, we tend to forget the dramatic tension behind these films. The musical numbers are always embedded in a story-line that contrives every possible conflict, hesitation, and misunderstanding to keep Astaire and Rogers apart. Like the couples in screwball comedies, they are treated as an incongruous pair, always at cross purposes. Apparently, no one informed them in advance of how perfect they were together, or let them in on the critical cliché – "He gives her class and she gives him sex." Their talk is the banter of two ill-matched people, unable to agree on anything except when they dance. "Let Yourself Go," says one signature number; "Never Gonna Dance," says another. Dancing is not simply what they do, it's what their films are about.

And when they do dance, an astonishing metamorphosis takes place. Feelings they could never articulate are suddenly acted out in movement. Like all genuine couples, together they are something they could never have been separately, not simply romantic, not simply a dream of swank and elegance inherited from the night-club era of the 1920s, but a dream of motion that appealed to people whose lives were pinched, anxious, graceless, and static.

With the coming of sound films, the thirties also became the great age of dialogue comedy, the spoken equivalent of Astaire's dancing and Cole Porter's songs. The great couples in thirties comedies – William Powell and Myrna Loy, Katherine Hepburn and Cary Grant, Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, Carole Lombard and any of her partners – were wonderful talkers rather than ideal lovers. In the age of the stricter Production Code, which descended like a Velvet Curtain in 1934, the zest and effervescence of sharp repartee, the look that accompanied this thrust and parry, was the only effective way of being sexual (rather than merely sentimental). The crackle and speed of the dialogue, the frantic, farcical pace of the action, represented yet another form of freedom and mobility.

The screwball comedies were usually set in a comic-opera world of wealth and ease, but also a world hemmed in by stuffy conventions and rigid family proscriptions. The bubbly, unpredictable women played by Lombard or Hepburn in films like *My Man Godfrey* or *Bringing Up Baby* represented the lure of sexual or social irresponsibility. Think of the sheer lunacy of Hepburn and Grant singing "I can't give you anything but love" to a leopard on someone else's roof. The zany freedom of their behavior is made possible by money but also by energy, spirit, insou-

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ciance, and independence, qualities with which their hard-pressed audience was quick to identify. The huge dinosaur skeleton which collapses at the end of *Bringing Up Baby* represents the dry bones of the past, rigid, sexless, and sterile, while Hepburn's daffy effervescence and mobility suggests an unstoppable life-force daringly oriented towards the unknown, towards the future.

This tells us that not money and success, not even elegance and sophistication were the real dream of the expressive culture of the thirties, but this dream of mobility, with its thrust towards the future. Certainly the key to thirties architecture and design was the dedication to an ideal of motion, the famous streamlining: the loops and curves of its Deco modernism which pretended to be clean and functional but were actually so decorative and stylized. At first the completion of large projects like Rockefeller Center, the Chrysler Building, and the Empire State Building was an act of blind faith carried forward during the worst years of the Depression. But after 1933, when few large buildings were built, a new and more genuinely hopeful note enabled this architectural style to be applied to the world of consumer goods, furniture styles, and industrial design.

Streamlining was a way of putting speed and motion into consumer goods by associating them with the dynamic energy of the machine, at just the moment when consumer demand was low and so much of the work force and the industrial plant was idle. As Eva Weber writes in *Art Deco in America:* "The style's main function was to attract new customers by means of its persuasive allusions to modernism, high style, efficiency, and speed." From the Century of Progress exhibition in Chicago in 1933 to the great New York World's Fair of 1939-40, with its famous GM Futurama, this decade of near-stagnation, in which the world was also spiraling down towards totalitarianism and war, devoted itself to imagining a sleek, streamlined consumer culture that would not come into being until after 1945.

The age of industrial decline was also the Golden Age of industrial design. The man who took the motor off the top of the refrigerator made a fortune, for sales skyrocketed, even in the depressed thirties. The GM Futurama rightly predicted the automotive America of 1960, crisscrossed by ribbons of new highways. The loops and curves of Art Deco eventually became the cloverleafs of the Interstate Highway System, superseding the right-angle grid of downtown traffic patterns. Out of the stagnation of the present, the thirties had invented the future. Again Americans would take to the road, but not as drifters or fugitives. In the postwar years, with the growth of suburbia, Americans at last achieved

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the mobility that had been denied to them during hard times.

Thus what began seemingly as a world of fantasy, a denial of the Depression, was in fact a response to it, an effective antidote to it. Perhaps the most far-reaching legacy of the Depression was the consumer culture, the automotive culture, the suburbanized one-family house culture that followed the war. But this brought new problems in its wake. With the decaying central cities, the traffic jams, the polluted environment, America discovered that, along with poverty, prosperity too had its price. Even before the huge migrations to the Sunbelt and California, the social critics of the fifties (like William H. Whyte) suggested that America was becoming a much more rootless society. After the privations of depression and war came the stupefaction of affluence, the boredom and anomie of suburbia.

So in the end, the dream of mobility could turn into a terrible disappointment for some who succeeded and others who were left behind, and the Depression era, like the wartime, would come nostalgically to seem more authentic, more genuine, a time when life seemed more real and Americans lived much closer to the bone.

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KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

When I began assembling my notes for this article, I discovered that half of the exhibitions I wanted to write about were by women. I'm not sure what this means, since the same male-female proportion probably would obtain if I calculated the number of shows I saw and didn't want to write about, but given my deep resistance to work that is primarily about "issues" and only secondarily – if at all – about being art, it could be that art made by women is at last being shown as a matter of course, not of politics, with a resulting drop in the visibility of ideologically-motivated work by professional "women artists." All that can safely be concluded, of course, is that about half of the artists whose work interested me most last season are female. Their work, if I am reading it accurately, is concerned with issues other than being women, as if they assumed that femaleness, like maleness, is a given that will inevitably make itself felt in the work, whatever its form, and that sexual identity is only one of many elements that make up a particular personality, and not its defining characteristic. The art that springs from these assumptions is refreshingly free of ideology.

Laurie Fendrich's position on gender issues, for example, was not the point of her fall exhibition at E. M. Donahue Gallery. Her eccentric, clear-headed geometric paintings could, I suppose, inspire orthodox feminists to invoke such antecedents as Sonia Delaunay, the hard-edge painter's answer to Frida Kahlo, or the heroines of Russian Constructivism, but Stuart Davis, among other American Cubists, comes to mind more readily in relation to Fendrich's engaging compositions and her crisp surfaces. What is more striking about these pictures is their palette. Fendrich is a risk-taking colorist who turns the orchestration of hues into a kind of high-wire act, jamming together edgy, saturated, apparently incompatible colors and carefully adjusting their amounts and configurations to keep them in a tense balance. In her best works, she succeeds not only in making these unlikely partners live cheerfully together, but turns them into dynamic space-makers.

The works in Phoebe Helman's *Shadowland,* seen in Boston last spring and at the Pratt Manhattan Center and Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, last fall, explore territory at the opposite pole from Fendrich's. Helman's enormous, near-monochrome dark canvases are about improvisation, blurring, and cancelling out. Organized as a tribute to the late painter,

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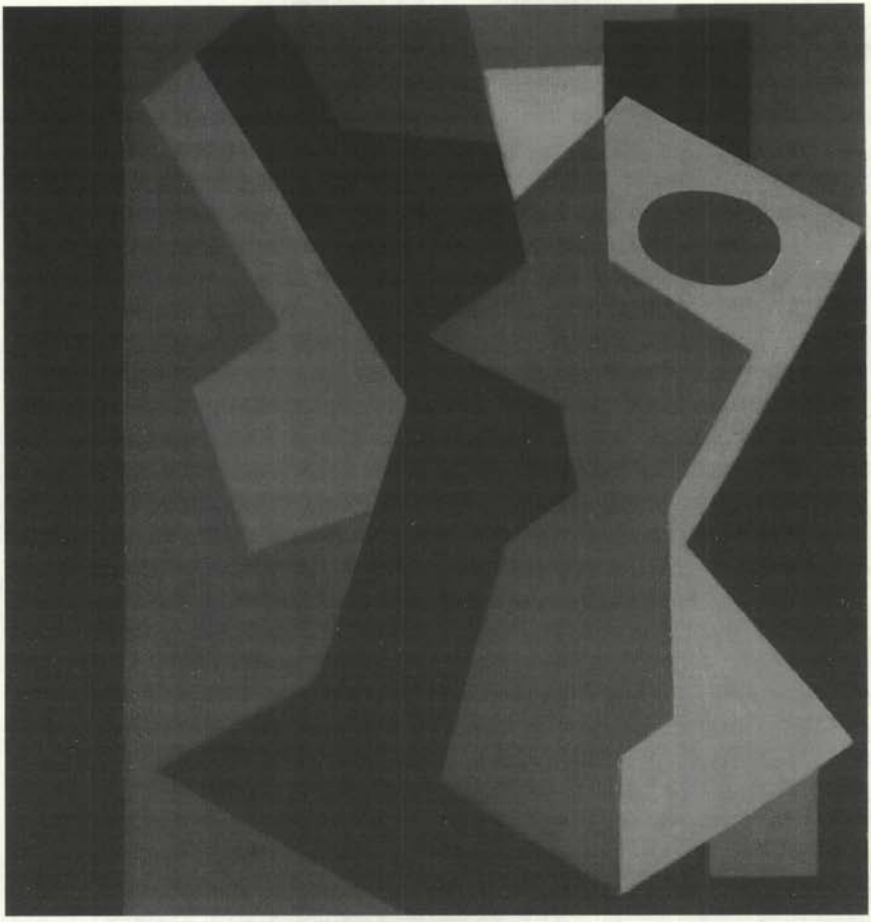

Squirrel Fever (1995) by Laurie Fendrich. Oil on canvas. 30 inches by 28 inches. Courtesy of E. M. Donahue Gallery.

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the show was a testimonial to Helman's ambition, accomplishment, and enduring belief in the expressive power of making; in the *Shadowland* series, richly-layered surfaces, built up with repetitive, dragged marks, which are in turn submerged in the accumulation, alert us to the power of the hand. Each long horizontal painting turns out to be constructed from an irregular series of canvases, a reminder that Helman also worked provocatively in three dimensions.

The *Shadowland* pictures are both lyrical and brutal. Crusty surfaces coexist with transparent washes; flickers of rich color and explosions of glowing light contradict the dominant black-browns, black-blues, and murky grays. Perhaps because of their somber palette and because the pictures were made at the end of Helman's cruelly shortened life, the catalogue essays by Donald Kuspit and Michael Phillips stress despair and anguish; Kuspit writes of "primitive agony" and sees the series as a meditation on the absurdity of making art, which can solve no practical, life-threatening problems. The *Shadowland* series certainly can be read this way, but the paintings are also joyous – which is not the same as happy. They affirm the pleasure of moving paint on a surface and of assembling disparate elements to make a tenuously coherent whole. Above all, they celebrate the alchemical power of the painter to turn inert matter, even inert matter without the allure of chromatic color, into something seductive and arresting.

Steel, the exhibition of Patricia Layman Bazelon's photographs at the Brooklyn Museum was, like *Shadowland,* a memorial to a talented artist whose life was tragically cut short. (A larger version of the show was seen earlier this year at Anderson Gallery, Buffalo.) Bazelon, a highly respected English-born architectural photographer, spent many years in Buffalo, where she became fascinated with the lakeshore's wealth of industrial structures, some still in use, others derelict, monuments to vanished prosperity. For more than a decade, Bazelon photographed the silos, grain elevators, factories, warehouses, and those nameless, intricate structures, obviously designed for very specific uses, that ring the Great Lakes, scrutinizing them with an exacting eye, a scrupulous choice of viewpoints, and an astonishing sensitivity to light, tonality, and placement. Many of these photos were used by the architectural historian and critic, Reyner Banham, to illustrate his study of American industrial buildings, *A Concrete Atlantis*.

A few years ago, Bazelon was given the run of an enormous, abandoned steel mill and produced a correspondingly large group of color photographs from which *Steel* was selected. She filtered her uningratiating subject matter through her awareness of nuance, tracking the dif-

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ference between indoors and out in the vast complex of skylit sheds and courtyards, responding to variations in light at different times of day and in different seasons. The industrial wasteland is transformed by Bazelon's penetrating eye, without being romanticized or politicized; she simply selects and presents. But her deadpan, elegant images remind us that the American factory, once seen as a proud emblem of prosperity, modernity, and progress, even as a symbol of security, has changed its meaning in the face of new technologies, a shifting world economy, and new concerns about the environment. There's clearly something to ponder in the fact that this record of America is an English woman's view of a place traditionally associated with maleness – in terms of physical labor, strength, toughness, and noise, not to mention man's mastery of the machine – but Bazelon trusted her images to get this across. *Steel* makes it plain that she was right to do so. (I wish she had had other ideas about frames and presentation, but that's minor.)

Until a few years ago, any discussion of Medrie MacPhee's paintings would have addressed issues similar to those in Bazelon's photographs. MacPhee was also drawn to the enigmatic structures of harborfronts and factories, using them not literally, but as potent metaphors for the female body and sometimes for nature itself. Later, she shifted her viewpoint from exterior to interior, thrusting her beholder deep inside invented structures, at once machine-like and anatomical, counterbalancing her disconcerting forms and destabilizing spaces with tender, albeit acidic hues and delicate paint handling.

MacPhee's newest pictures, seen at Paolo Baldacci Gallery, derive logically from her earlier obsessions and depart from them. Drawing, long one of her strengths, dominates. The "paintings," in fact, are oversized, colored gouache and charcoal drawings on paper mounted on canvas. Images slide across a patchwork of sheets, against a dry, subtly inflected, continuous surface punctuated by the papers' edges, small interruptions marked by drifts of color. MacPhee's imagery is still simultaneously organic and mechanical, but it is more mysterious, multivalent, and evocative than ever, suggesting plant growth, internal organs, primitive machinery, the geometric underpinnings of Renaissance drawing, and much more, all at the same time. Are those bellows or lungs? A carnivorous plant or a condottiere's hat frame? I kept thinking about Leonardo's diagrams for weapons, machines, and civil engineering projects and the way they coexist with meticulous anatomical and botanical studies.

Scale seems unstable in MacPhee's new paintings. Images pulse between the miniature and the monumental, adding to their poetry and

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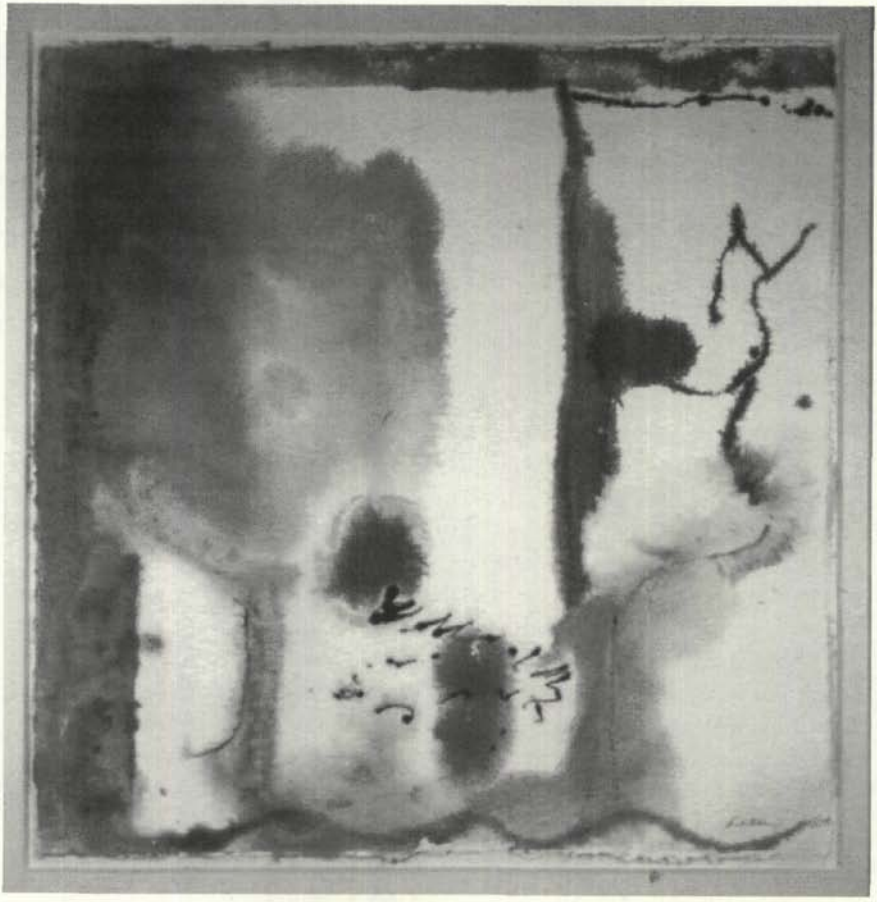

Beginnings (1994) by Helen Frankenthaler. Acrylic on paper. 78 and 3/4 inches by 77 and 3/4 inches. Courtesy of Knoedler & Company.

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mystery, but also unsettling the viewer and providing an antidote to the pictures' fragility and lyricism. The largest works, many with warm, earth-toned grounds, like weathered stucco walls, also have architectural associations. (Good as the large works in the show were, a series of small, intensely colored pictures was equally impressive and ambitious.) For some time, MacPhee has been a painter to take seriously. Her newest work seems to me even more inventive and more haunting than what preceded it, and that's saying a good deal.

Helen Frankenthaler's show of recent work at Knoedler and Company, one of her strongest exhibitions in the last few years, was one of the season's highlights. Her giant paintings on paper - over six feet square on average – were like summings up of her most persistent concerns, translated into completely fresh, unpredictable terms. Part of the pictures' impact admittedly came from their complete dismantling of our assumptions about the nature of works on paper – that they are fragile, informal, and intimate, for starters – and that they have a lot to do with line; but here are *paintings* on the scale of the most ambitious canvases imaginable, on paper as robust as a plaster wall. Yet they are also very much about the character of their materials: about the way paint soaks into paper and slides along its surface, the way transparent color becomes radiant against a white sheet, the way a rapid line plays against a ragged, hand-cast edge.

Of course, for many years, Frankenthaler has made works on paper with the same enthusiasm and seriousness she has given to her canvases, but rarely on this scale. Her new paperworks are both typical of her and surprising. In some, you recognize with pleasure her familiar expressive "handwriting" – fluent, large-scale drawing and pools of pigment – but there are other notable, atypical works constructed with solid blocks of color or roughly brushed scumbles. As always, half-glimpsed allusions, never literal, always fleeting, emerge and then disappear – a suggestion of landscape space or of an interior, for example. As always, too, each image seems at once the result of the paint's determining its own fate and of having been manipulated by a particular, strong-minded individual. Exuberant, gutsy, tough, and very beautiful, they are memorable pictures.

What about the other half – the exhibitions by male artists? Shows of new work by John Gibson and Michael Mulhern, at Perspective Fine Arts and Rosenberg and Kaufman Gallery, respectively, offered opportunities to stay up to date on the evolution of two thoughtful painters whose work is worth following. For several years, Mulhern has tested the limits of painting-as-object against painting-as-metaphor in dense lit

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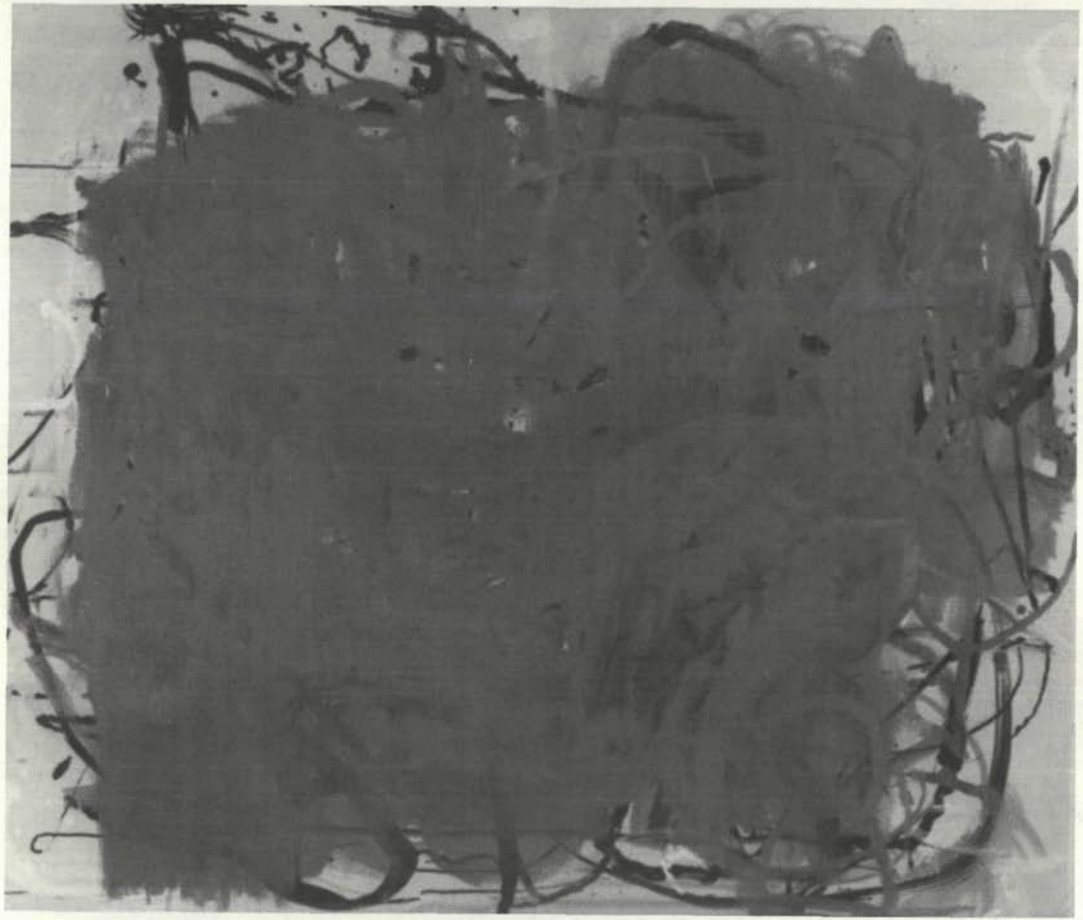

Overcoat 12 (1995) by Michael Mulhern. Flashe, Acrylic, Aluminum Paint on Canvas. 72 inches by 84 inches. Courtesy of Rosenberg+Kaufman Fine Art.

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tle pictures in which he takes apart the expressive and physical vocabulary of gestural abstraction and then puts it back together again. (However theoretical this may sound, Mulhern's pictures appear to be based on pure intuition.)

His recent exhibition consisted chiefly of black and white, loosely constructed paintings that, while small, suggested infinite expansion beyond the edge of the canvas, as though their drawing – which always reads as autonomous fragment, never as boundary – had drifted loose from some vast, incomprehensible structure. A couple of large, expansive canvases suggested than Mulhern has entered new territory. It's a terrain more spatially ambiguous and less reassuring then the zones he had explored previously, but it may ultimately prove even more stimulating. The large pictures interested me a great deal because of their awkwardness and their sense of discovery. They made me intensely curious about what will come next.

Gibson's new paintings were, as can be expected of him, seductive and eerie. He continues to make apparently straightforward "portraits" of geometric solids, here large spheres with complex patterns, in apparently neutral settings – "apparently" because nothing is ever what it seems in these pictures. Their full strangeness however, takes time to discover. If you persevere, monochrome expanses declare themselves as complex layerings of many hues, incised lines cancel out illusion, and logic itself is subverted. The glowing spheres levitate. In a vertical rectangular picture with a bottomless blue ground and a ball with pale, rosy spirals, the space above the ball becomes charged and dramatic; by contrast, the square format versions of the motif seem, at first acquaintance, more harmonious and confrontational, but the regularity of the square makes evident the asymmetries Gibbon has made you read initially as symmetries. It rapidly becomes clear that what you think you see doesn't exist.

I'm not suggesting that Gibson's pictures are simply clever optical games. Far from it. He seems wholly engaged by fundamental questions about the nature of perception, and he addresses them in purely painterly terms, exploring the expressive possibilities of moody, luminous colors, or the spatial drama implicit in shifting the position of the ball. In the end, Gibson's paintings seem to be about unfulfilled longing, of yearning for a state of rational, harmonious order perhaps impossible to achieve. For all their resonant color, their solemn frontality, and their appeal to conceptions of the classical, Gibson's pictures prove to be deeply eccentric and all the more fascinating because of it.

One of the surprises of the season was David Bates's show of slightly tongue-in-cheek sculptures at Charles Cowles Gallery. (They may not be

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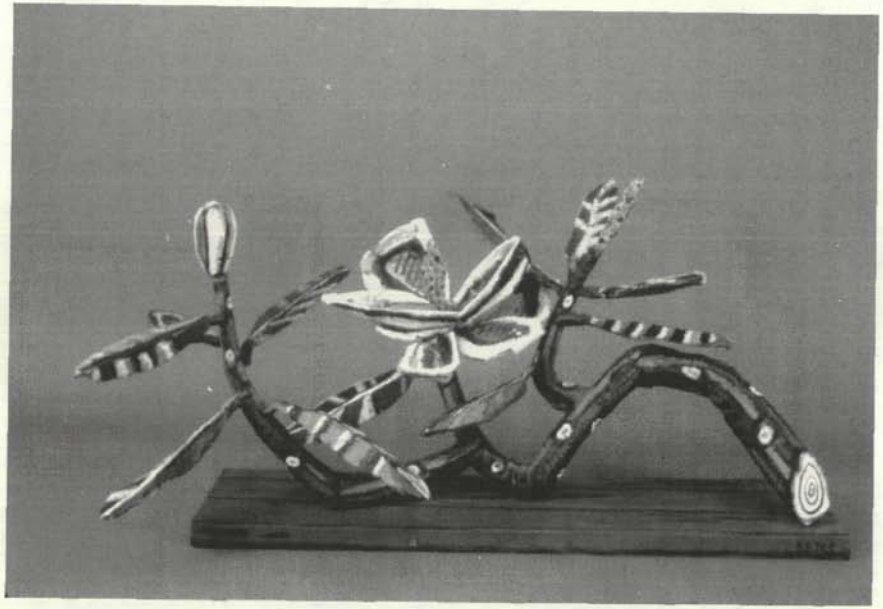

Magnolia Branch (1994) by David Bates. Polychromed bronze. 23 inches by 45 inches by 34 inches. Courtesy of Charles Cowles Gallery.

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sculptures at all, but weirdly solidified paintings.) These cobbled-together, painted wood constructions verge on parody – a kind of "aw shucks" Cubism – but they address important issues of two- and three-dimensionality and of solidity and openness, along with the eternal, vexed question of color in sculpture. More important, they do so with wit and charm.

To my eye, Bates is best when he takes liberties with form, as he does in the largest piece in the show, an oversized seated man who isn't so much sitting on a chair as fused with its construction. Torso and chair back play complicated games; a bent leg translates into a right-angle structure that diagrams "legness" without reconstructing it literally. In a smaller seated figure, cast in bronze and painted, a plaid shirt becomes a delicious three-dimensional grid, while the painted pattern moves across a void onto a free-floating curve that diagrams "armness." Bates is never this fearless or improvisatory when it comes to faces and hands. He seems to need to have all facial features present, set in a solid, volumetric head, and to preserve hands intact, with all fingers accounted for, self-imposed taboos that can stop a construction dead; you recognize that something is a face without getting involved in how that face has been evoked. But the series is new to Bates, and the good parts are so good that I'm willing to withhold my reservations.

The other surprise of the season was discovering that Wright Gallery, a hard-to-find Soho space long associated with traditional African art, has begun to show work by contemporary African artists. The fall show by a pair of South Africans, Rudzani Nemasetoni and Sholto Ainslie, augurs well. Both artists are young and their work is as yet uneven, but it is full of promise and rewards attention.

Nemasetoni (who has been working at the renowned Bob Blackburn Studios and at the Studio Museum in Harlem) showed gritty, vaguely disturbing collage-constructions incorporating everything from photo-etching to window frames to the stamped tin used on ceilings. The best were both rough-edged and elegant; others risked overloading. That they were highly politicized objects, as well as visually arresting ones, became apparent when you discovered that they also included pages of a Passbook belonging to the artist's father – a relic of a detestable and detested necessity of life in segregated South Africa. Nemasetoni says that he wants his work to express "the social and political dichotomy that I experienced growing up . . . under Apartheid." The elegantly produced, delicately colored Passbook with its ugly purpose serves both as metaphor and as generating image for his sculptures. Namasetoni's dispassionate description of the severely regulated way of life that inevitably informs his art is interesting and useful. It wouldn't be,

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if his constructions weren't as good and as self-sufficient as they are, but for once, knowing more about context actually enhances your experience.

Sholto Ainslie, who grew up in a multiracial family of artists and political activists, makes wholly non-political art that nevertheless shares the rough-hewn character of Nemasetoni's. His bold, intensely colored abstract pictures bear witness to a process of layering and perhaps re-excavating, of layering long slabs of color against or perhaps on top of long slabs of color, in the way that you might build a wall. The best pictures have an engaging slap-dash physicality, a robust energy, and an immediacy that provides needed tension by contradicting the evidence of slow accumulation in Ainslie's facture. Is any of this particularly African? Perhaps the saturated palette and the dry, crumbly surfaces. The painter says that he has always been fascinated by "topographical features of the earth, particularly in arid areas" and thinks of his paintings as "torn landscapes or aerial landscapes," but there's no need to be literal about any of this. Like his black colleague's deceptively poetic constructions, Ainslie's strongest paintings seem quite self-sufficient, whatever their motivation.

Seven Painters, an ambitious group exhibition at Nicholas Alexander Gallery, was both an excellent idea and something of a missed opportunity. A selection of works made between 1967 and 1972 by Dan Christensen, Ronald Davis, Ronnie Landfield, William Pettet, Larry Poons, Lawrence Stafford, and Peter Young, the show was a welcome reminder of how fresh, vigorous, and inventive some of the color-driven abstraction of the sixties and early seventies continues to look. These days, when abstract art must be hedged around with irony and built-in disclaimers if it is to qualify as noteworthy in modish circles, it is refreshing to confront painting that was made with whole-hearted enthusiasm and a belief that aesthetic experience can be deeply pleasurable without compromising seriousness. Not all of the works in the show have worn equally well, but a significant number looked as unexpected and convincing as they did when they were first shown: a Poons that flirted with incoherence, a Christensen built of radiant whiplash drawing, a Landfield that managed to be personal while rendering homage to Matisse, a Davis that played games with illusionism and materiality.

Why then speak of a missed opportunity? Many of the works included seemed expedient rather than imperative choices. It may have been due to the necessity of having works available for sale in a show at a commercial gallery or – and this is a delicate point – it may have been the result of the show's having been selected by one of the exhibiting

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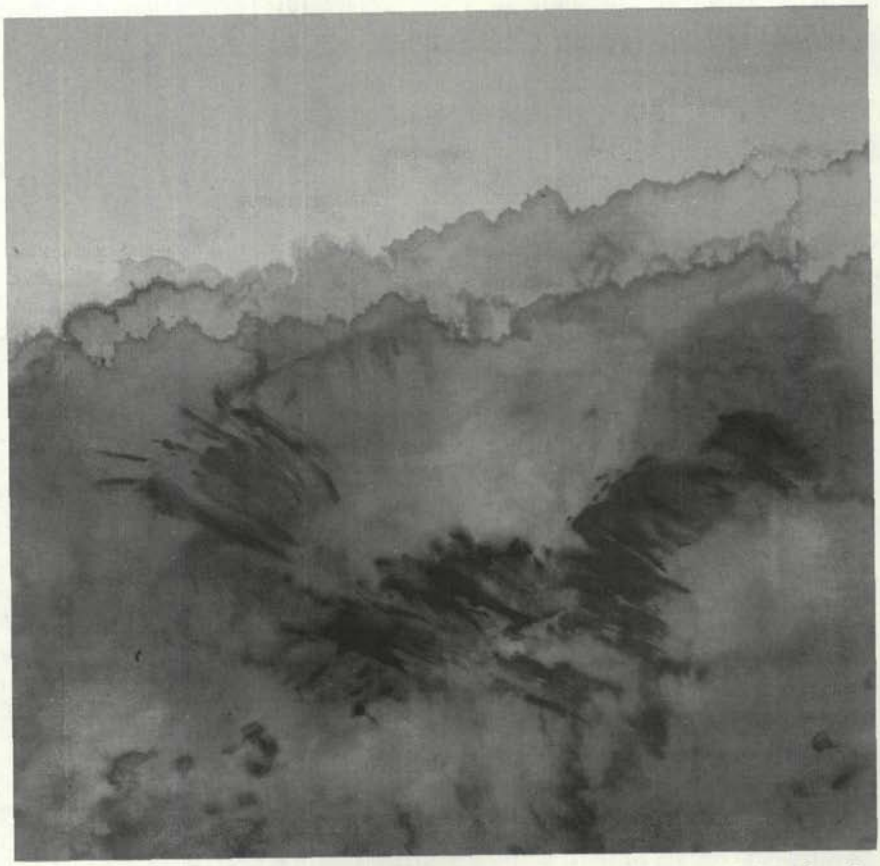

Atlantic Sea (1971) by Ronnie Landfield. Acrylic on canvas. 90 inches by 83 and 1/2 inches. Courtesy of Nicholas Alexander Gallery.

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artists, Ronnie Landfield. The weighting of the show in terms of the numbers of pictures by each participant and, sometimes, in terms of quality, suggested that Landfield had far less restricted access to his own works than to those of his colleagues. Then there's the even more delicate question of who was included – and who excluded – in the first place.

It would be extremely interesting to see a thoughtful exhibition that surveyed the period in question. *Seven Painters,* while obviously full of good intentions, understandably fell short. This is all the more frustrating because it seems unlikely that any significant institution is going to expand on the idea, given the current preference for Duchamp-inspired, largely conceptual art, rather than for the "Matisse-inspired," visual painting of the artists in *Seven Painters* and their colleagues. Maybe it's time for a little revisionism?

Perhaps there is hope. *Goya at the Metropolitian Museum of Art* and *Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt,* at the Met, and the Museum of Modern Art's Mondrian retrospective, the trio of stellar exhibitions that inaugurated the fall season in New York, all emphasized the importance of connoisseurship, of intense interrogation of the actual work of art, to any understanding of the real significance of that work or the artist's achievement. In some circles, those are radical concepts.) Seeing the Met's questionable *Majas on a Balcony* beside the apparently real version of the picture, from a private collection, was thrilling. The Met's picture paled and flattened in comparison to the vivid, lively "hidden" *Majas,* which was not only more vigorously painted, but deployed more subtle lighting, more complex exchanges between the protagonists and – most convincingly, to my eye at least – spatial articulations as dramatic and telling as in the astonishing murals Goya painted in the Madrid chapel of San Antonio de la Florída. *Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt* was similarly eye-testing and similarly demanded that viewers look hard, concentrate, and draw conclusions based on visual evidence. The Mondrian retrospective, intelligently chosen and installed, was further affirmation of how irreplaceable direct experience is. Picture after picture made it clear how unsystematic and how sensual a painter Mondrian really was, the apparent reductiveness of his means notwithstanding, something that is never apparent from reproductions, but which became obvious when you were face to face with groups of painstakingly adjusted, delicately nuanced paintings. You emerged from the show wholly convinced of the importance of touch and intuition to Mondrian's method, not simply in the ravishing, pulsing ocean jetty pictures, but in even the severest black and white grid paintings. And all this from *looking.*

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PETER SHAW

Pseudo-reform in the Academy

Most academics and intellectuals were taken by surprise in the 1970s when politicization of the academy got underway. Assault on the Western classics, the championing of multiculturalism, and political indoctrination in the classroom went largely unchallenged for several years. It was not until the mid-1980s that philosophical refutations of deconstruction began to appear, and not until the nineties that the Western canon of great books began to be defended. Once undertaken, though, the intellectual counterattack had its impact. It exposed the politically radical basis of the various assaults, which the press then reported on in a critical manner.

As a result of the publicity, influential academic politicizers, who had been able to work in relative obscurity, were forced to answer to a wider public. This put them in an embarrassing position whether they chose to defend or to deny that they politicized scholarship and teaching. Accordingly, some of them began to hedge their positions. At the very least they stopped denouncing Western "logocentrism" (logical thinking) as a bourgeois plot to enslave the working class. As for the great works of the West, which for years had been attacked as engines of the same bourgeois plot, they sometimes were acknowledged to have a defensible *raison d'etre*.

The traditionalist counterattack led to other concessions as well. Some disavowed political correctness – intellectual intimidation and the willing or unwilling capitulations it brings about. As of 1995 it was fair to say that even though the battle between the assaulters of tradition and its defenders continued to rage, the assaulters were in retreat.

On the other hand, this retreat did not stop the long march of anti-traditional attitudes throughout academe. The dominance of poststructuralists, radical feminists, and other beneficiaries of the assault on traditional understandings continued to grow. Professional organizations, deans, and college presidents endorsed ever-new politicizations of scholarship. To raise money, it was sufficient to profess a heightened social consciousness or status as a champion of one or another self-proclaimed victim group. Deans and presidents sponsored institutes calculated to overthrow traditional scholarship. Administrators installed new courses, special academic divisions, and even departments calculated to advance a radical agenda.

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Therefore, if an intellectual retreat has taken place, it has been one without institutional consequences – or, rather, with consequences more in keeping with an intellectual triumph than an intellectual rout. Understanding this outcome – or non-outcome – requires taking a careful look at both the counterattack by the traditionalists, and the admissions, reformations, and recantations it brought about.

First, the intellectual retreat. This has been a sporadic, unpublicized development. Among its relatively prominent evidence was the 1993 so-called conversion of Sheldon Hackney during Senate hearings on his nomination as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. As president of the University of Pennsylvania, Hackney had failed to control incidents of politically correct intimidation, and these were on everyone's mind as he was questioned by a Senatorial committee. To the surprise of many who opposed his nomination, Hackney at one point volunteered having second thoughts about the politically correct, coercive speech codes he had supported. He said that he now recognized the dangers of political correctness.

Hackney was confirmed, took over as head of the Endowment, and then proceeded to fund projects conceived in the spirit of political correctness and hostility to the West. Yet, the projects he favored were by no means the most extreme expressions of such hostility. He continued to institutionalize the tendencies he had been associated with, but in a milder way. Hackney's Senate recantation was genuine, even though the habits of thought it disavowed remained with him in attenuated form.

Not long before Hackney, other prominent academics began to acknowledge the coercive atmosphere that had come to rule the academy. On William Buckley's "Firing Line" television program, Catherine Stimpson, Rutgers professor and now director of the politically correct MacArthur Foundation "genius" awards, as they are popularly known, was as surprising as Hackney. "There is PC," she declared, and added that she deplored its excesses.

Similarly, Stanley Fish, former chairman of the most politically correct English department in the country at Duke University, eschewed the usual evasions and denials. "I am supposed to tell you that political correctness is a media-fabricated myth," a Duke student newspaper reported his saying, "and the invention of political correctness is itself a piece of political strategy. Well, I must disappoint; there is something called political correctness, and I know this to be true for the best of all reasons; I have seen it and experienced it."

It would have been more accurate for Fish to say that he knew about PC because he had been one of its endorsers. Still, his acknowledgment added to the record.

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Statements made at the much-publicized 1993 Duke University conference organized to counter attacks on political correctness were particularly striking. The speakers seemed unfazed by the attacks. They maintained that their radical and deconstructionist programs were enlightened and forward-looking. One speaker, Richard Rorty, described the conference as "a rally of [the] left." The audience chortled derisively at mention of William Bennett, Allan Bloom, or E. D. Hirsch, Jr. and nodded respectfully at the names of Nietzsche, Derrida, Gramsci, or Foucault.

Rorty was not entirely approving. He went on to dismiss poststructuralist theorist Frank Lentricchia's left-inspired, guiding principle that "our society is mainly unreasonable." Rorty took care to proclaim himself a "reformist." But he had disclosed and criticized the left politicalization of the academy.

Despite its politically correct atmosphere, the conference was notable for concessions to the traditionalism it was laughing at. For example, Phyllis Franklin, former chairman of the politically correct Modern Language Association, gave the following account of her organization's workings:

> I receive letters from MLA members commenting on intellectual and professional questions, and some of the authors of these letters ask that I not reveal their names. They fear that colleagues in their departments and in the MLA will treat them badly because of their views. Some of them are right. I have observed occasional exchanges in meetings at our annual convention when participants all but prevented someone who wished to be heard from speaking.

Still, Franklin's organization did not change its politically correct policies and attitudes. Finally, Todd Gitlin, a leftist scholar, conceded that "a bitter intolerance emanates from much of the academic left." Thus, within a short period, practitioners and apologists for political correctness have gone from denying its existence to inadvertently confessing it, to explicitly admitting its existence, or to disavowing it, as Hackney did.

Yet just how predominantly rhetorical all these admissions proved to be is evident from the continuing coercive behavior of less prominent academics. Some of these write articles describing with self-satisfaction the political coercion they further in their classrooms. Patricia Bizzell avows without self-consciousness that "many of us in literature and in composition studies wish to serve politically left-oriented or liberatory

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goals in our teaching." She goes on to quote Robert Giroux's belief that a professor's goal should be "to teach what students need to know to improve the social order." And Sharon Crowley explains how the professors' social aims are to be pursued: "We must give up our traditional subscription to liberal tolerance," she writes, "if we are to bring about social change through [the students]."

As the coerciveness of the academy has become inceasingly visible, some more nimble academics have repositioned themselves as moderates. They now aver that they reject the most radical and intolerant tendencies of their colleagues. Yet when in 1993 Carol Iannone, writing in *Commentary,* analyzing books in which such repositioning took place – by Frederick Crews, Henry Louis Gates, Gerald Graff, David Bromwich, and James Atlas – she found that the authors in effect continued to support the tendencies that led to political correctness. Rhetorically distancing themselves from both the extreme left and the (putatively) extreme right they turned out above all to be advancing "PC with a human face."

Political correctness is not difficult to grasp. It is a matter of intimidation ranging from the busybodyish to physically threatening coercion, that in any of its forms damages the integrity of academic and intellectual life. It took little more than the glare of press exposure to bring about public condemnation of such practices – and to put the politically correct on the defensive. In contrast, the attacks on "logocentrism" and on the Western canon launched by deconstructionists and other poststructuralists have been less easy to counter. Based as these attacks were on a philosophical relativism, they required a more subtle analysis – of a kind not eligible for journalistic reporting. This more scholarly part of the struggle was and is an internal academic matter, albeit one with equally important public consequences.

The relativists hold that we can never say we have understood something correctly. All analysis, and indeed all thought is a projection of accumulated prejudices arising from the circumstances of one's background. No such thing as an unfettered, objective judgment exists. Instead, race, class, and gender produce prejudices and distortions of which we are unaware. A "bourgeois," for example, will inevitably employ language and thought to advance the interests of his class. At least so goes the argument.

The trouble for poststructuralists lay in their own invariability: they seemed always to end up denouncing the bourgeosie, which was seen as an habitual producer of racists and homophobes, as well as political oppressors of the working class. Eventually such a caricature proved impos-

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sible to sustain. It might have been dismissed as simply silly. But academic protocol required that a technical, philosophical refutation be put forward. It consisted of the observation that the poststructuralist characterization of the bourgeoisie was itself an analysis and an interpretation. As such, it was logically open to the same charge of being subjective and unconsciously class-influenced as were the analyses and interpretations of the logocentrists.

The poststructuralists had to be aware of this contradiction. After all, the Sophists of ancient Greece, who were their relativist predecessors, recognized it at the outset. Their solution was insouciantly to pronounce their own arguments just as uncertain as those of Plato and their other opponents. This the poststructuralists could not emulate. They could not bring themselves to deconstruct their own political beliefs. To have done so would have meant abandoning their commitment to social change, as they denoted their vaguely leftist-liberal reformism. Reform was the only thing they firmly believed in – which meant that once their adherence to certainty was exposed, they were philosophically undone.

In 1983, Gerald Graff exposed this endeavor. But he went on to become an apologist for the multiculturalist-political makeover of the university. At present, Gerald Graff is a professor at the University of Chicago and president of Teachers for a Democratic Culture, an organization dedicated to resisting the traditionalist counterattack on political correctness and poststructuralism. But in 1983 Graff deftly identified the relativist assault as resting on the proposition "that all theories are a function of politics and power." This proposition, Graff pointed out, could be directed at deconstruction itself. "Like the familar paradox of the liar," he wrote

> This line of argument suffers from a built-in tendency to self-destruct. Presumably the proposition that truth is a function of power is itself asserted as true; yet presumably by its own declaration, the proposition too is a function of power. How then is the proposition to be taken? If the truth of the proposition that truth is a function of power is compromised by the fact that the proposition itself is a function of power, then there ceases to be any reason to take the proposition seriously as an argument.

In reaction to this and other devastating refutations of politically correct radical relativism, there have finally begun to appear breaches in the united front of "theory," the term preferred by its practitioners. Like the partial dissenters from political correctness, those previously associated

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with theory have decided that the truth lies in a moderate zone between extremes.

For example, the professor-authors Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob discuss relativist historical scholarship in their recent book, *Telling the Truth about History*. To begin with, they define the issues politically. "We take on both the relativists on the left and the defenders of the status quo ante on the right," they declare, incidentally making clear the left political source of scholarly relativism. On the other hand, somehow, they approve virtually all recent politically-inspired developments in their speciality, including affirmative action hiring. Soon ignoring their own putative rejection of relativism, nevertheless, they end by accepting the radicals' insistence that "new definitions of truth and objectivity are needed in every field of knowledge."

The formula of theoretical disavowal followed by continued support for poststructuralist principles also appears in anthropology. There, a husband-and-wife team has taken over the professional journal, *The American Anthropologist*. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports them as stating that "they are not imposing a heavy-handed agenda on the journal, the main scholarly publication of the American Anthropological Association." The *Chronicle* report continues: "But yet [they indicate], they really want to shake things up." The team's first issue is devoted almost entirely to cultural relativism and articles by feminists. Not surprisingly, "some scholars see in the journal what one called 'wholesale capitulation' to postmodernism and the self-reflexive turn of recent cultural anthropology." Also not surprisingly, the complaints are acknowledged by the two editors only in the form of their manifestly disingenuous disclaimer of radical intentions.

This happened also with the publication of the Duke conference's papers. These were introducted by Barbara Herrnstein Smith, who had convened the conference, and is known for her *Contingencies of Value,* which maintains that no opinion can be objective. It followed that the canon, a product of many opinions, can have no legitimacy.

Given the definiteness of this logic, it is surprising that in her "introduction" Smith proceeded to retreat from it. Canon makers, she has said, were deluded to think that their standards of judgment were any more than the subjective, unconscious products of social forces. But now she wishes it to be understood that even though the canon has been revised thanks to such assaults as hers, there is no need to take the matter all that seriously. If "films and writings by women and minority authors are being studied and taught," she reassuringly promised, this does "not reflect or require blithe disregard for appropriate standards."

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But for Herrnstein Smith to speak of "standards" amounts to abandonment of the relativist argument.

Stanley Fish has retreated even further. He, too, was identified with the poststructuralist assault on standards that enabled the assault on the classics. But now, along with his reversal on political correctness, he defends the canon (albeit without quite abandoning his poststructuralist-relativist habits). "The Great Books," he now says, "are never going to be dislodged, not necessarily because they're great with a capital G, in some way that could be confirmed by God, although I happen to think they are." Speaking at the paradoxically concessionary "rally of the left" Fish went yet a step further – to disparaging that most privileged of all educational nostrums, "multiculturalism." And while he was making a foray into political incorrectness, it seems, he decided to be as (temporarily) shocking as he possibly could be to liberal sensibilities by pronouncing multiculturalism as a "flat-out zany" idea.

Fish submitted defenses of multiculturalism by Gerald Graff and Betty Jean Craigie to logical scrutiny of the kind Graff himself had once used. He summarized Graff as wanting to elevate the appreciation of cultural differences to a central role in education. He quoted Craigie's wish to replace the canon with a curriculum that "would foster a tolerance – and, ideally, an appreciation – of cultural beliefs and behaviors different from our own." But, Fish pointed out, both the idea of tolerance and the elevation of differences are "the kind of normative and transcendental standards to which [Graff and Craigie] are putatively opposed." Thus, two professors, like Barbara Herrnstein Smith, inadvertently accept the existence of judgment and standards.

To be sure, Fish is not only notoriously self-contradicting, but also, as he freely admits, a careerist. Yet his repositioning, even if it means that he does not intend any real change in the relativist status quo, points to a profession-wide intellectual retreat. Two prominent critics have joined this retreat not only in theory but, it is said, in practice as well. Frank Lentricchia and Harold Bloom, previously associated with poststructuralism, have written books that not only abandon relativism but also appear to adopt traditional scholarly discourses and values.

In an enthusiastic review of Lentricchia's *Modernist Quartet,* a study of Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, Jeffrey Hart has celebrated this critic's putative reformation under the title "Prodigal Son." Hart writes that Lentricchia "has returned home from the tinkling cymbals of 'theory'." And Hart adds that Lentricchia, no longer employing the abstractions of theory, "stitches the literary text firmly onto the canvas backing of the historical tapestry."

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But Lentricchia seems not to have abandoned the view singled out by Richard Rorty: that American society is "unreasonable" (that is, unacceptable). Hart himself observes that "*Modernist Quartet* has a tendency not to look squarely at 'the cultural of capitalism' but to accept it as a large abstraction. . . . " "Capitalism" here means mass production, sameness, the cash nexus, the commodification of all things.

In other words, the historical tapestry turns out to be woven out of the drearily dull colors of Marxist orthodoxy.

Lentricchia believes in "cultural degradation under capitalism" and "manipulation of laborers into mindless mechanisms of repetition." Writers are just another kind of worker. He describes writer-workers as susceptible in their writing to mass methods of book circulation. These methods turn them into "faceless productive agents." Thereby, as Hart observes, "the attenuated lyric of 1900 becomes an example of a mass-produced and mass-consumed commodity." Lentricchia remains a collectivist, and as such is too concerned with denouncing the evils of "commodity capitalism" to allow for the possibility that individual writers or readers can rise above economic contingencies.

Lentricchia's pseudo-reform actually consists in a slight reworking of pages he wrote in the 1980s. He has adapted these to suit his tentative, disingenuous intellectual retreat of the 1990s and pruned away some of the Marxist jargon. Where in 1989 Wallace Stevens's "bifurcated career . . . perfectly realized the hegemonic aims of his capitalist socialization," the same dual career as businessman and poet now seems to have been "the perfect realization of the contradictory values of his society." Implication has replaced accusation: one set of the culture's values – those of business – are now only indirectly denigrated.

Also pruned away are the more strenuous radical sentiments of the 1980s. Lentricchia no longer criticizes Stevens's comfortable woman in her peignoir at the beginning of the poem, "Sunday Morning," in vulgar Marxist terms. He is now content to vaguely stigmatize her as "a comfortable woman of class," where previously her fine "bought things" inspired his resentment over their having been produced "by laborers who do not . . . sit about on Sunday morning in their smoking jackets and peignoirs."

Lentricchia's shifts of emphases would be indications of a genuinely altered outlook if he gave any hint of repudiating the assumptions of his earlier version. But since he does not, his cosmetic changes amount to no more than devices for repositioning himself as one of the literary-critical moderates of the 1990s. The radical politics that once drove his criticism now dances easily along with his new moderation.

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Harold Bloom's heterodoxy was always of a different kind. It consisted in his inventing one critical theory after another with hardly a nod toward received opinion. His anti-traditionalism consisted not in direct attacks like Herrnstein Smith's, or Fish's, or Lentricchia's. Their threat was like that of the atheist toward religion; Bloom's was like the more troubling indifference of someone who functions as though God simply does not exist.

As with Hart's favorable reception of Lentricchia's apparent departure from theory, Bloom's recent book, *The Western Canon,* has inspired enthusiasm among beleagured traditionalists. In their view, with his defense of the canon, Bloom has emerged as a champion of the traditional. Admittedly, his contemptuous dismissal of what he calls the School of Resentment (that is, of "Feminists, Afrocentrists, Marxists, Foucault-inspired New Historicists, or Deconstructors") is vigorous. But he also dismisses defenders of the canon. And he, too, attempts to position himself on a middle ground. He is not concerned, he writes, with the debate between the School of Resentment and "right-wing defenders of the Canon, who wish to preserve it for its supposed (and nonexistent) moral values." Elsewhere he condemns "ideological defenses" of the canon for being "as pernicious in regard to aesthetic values as the onslaughts of attackers."

But these are caricatures. Not all "right-wing" defenders of the canon emphasize moral values – and certainly not to the exclusion of aesthetic judgment. Bloom, though, adopts the extreme aestheticist contention that literature has no ethical or moral effect. He correctly points out that "the undeniable economics of Literature" (Lentricchia's concern) "do not determine questions of aesthetic supremacy." But Bloom soon contradicts himself. The canon turns out to be "the authentic foundation for social thinking." In other words, it serves a social and perhaps even moral function very like that claimed by its "right-wing" defenders.

But by resting his defense of the canon on personal opinions about style, Bloom puts the traditionalist case on its weakest possible footing. He pronounces T. S. Eliot a canonical author thanks to his stylistic influence on the poet Hart Crane. "Crane rejected Eliot's vision but could not evade Eliot's idiom," Bloom asserts. And he concludes that "great styles are sufficient for canonicity because they possess the power of contamination, and contamination is the pragmatic test for canon formation." But in 1977, again evaluating famous writers no less authoritatively, Bloom made the following pronouncement in *The New York Times Book Review*: "Most overrated: T. S. Eliot, all of him, verse and

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prose. . . . his verse is (mostly) weak; his prose is wholly tendentious."

Bloom became notorious some twenty-five years ago by maintaining that all interpretations of written works are misreadings of those works. This claim anticipated deconstruction's contention that we cannot ever truly comprehend any piece of writing.

Bloom now disagrees. But his way of conferring canonical status tends to confirm the poststructuralist case. All is subjective. Therefore, reasoned argument may as well be replaced by Bloom's assertions. These, though they refer to canonicity, remain in accord with poststructuralism, and are therefore no less damaging to the case for a reasonably arrived-at consensus about which are the great works. Bloom, then, helped bring about the canon assault that he now finds distasteful, and even now remains more loyal to his old debunking ways than to the canon.

Most important, Bloom begs the larger question of what it is that makes the canon significant and worth arguing over in the first place. He insists that "the defense of the Western Canon is in no way a defense of the West." But it is. For the process of informed consensus that resulted in broad agreement about which works constitute the canon is a crucial example of Western critical thought. The canon assaulters freely aver that they are attempting to delegitimize this kind of thought. If Bloom's self-indulgent declarations on behalf of the canon have any use, therefore, it is to remind us that defense of the canon makes sense only in the context of the defense of rational thought.

From another point of view, though, Bloom's belated defense of the canon is surely a notable development. It comes on the heels of the striking admissions by academic administrators like Phyllis Franklin and Catherine Stimpson that political correctness rules in the university. It also follows the retreat from the more extreme forms of deconstruction and poststructuralism by academics like Lentricchia and Fish. And finally it follows acknowledgments of both political correctness and the excesses of contemporary scholarship by those who, like Graff, have been repositioning themselves between two supposed extremes. The significant development in each of these instances is a perhaps reluctant yet irreversible intellectual capitulation to the traditionalist critique.

At the same time, of course, the very tendencies being apologized for and disavowed by prominent academics have tightened their hold on the academic culture. The press's exposés, and the professors's embarrassed disavowals of political correctness, multiculturalism, and canon assault have left unaffected the continuing institutionalization of these practices in the academy. All the concessions and all the repositionings have proved to be pseudo-reformations. If anything, they have advanced rather than slowed the tendencies they appeared to be abandoning.

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Nevertheless, the intellectual capitulation that I have outlined may prove to be an early indicator of genuine change. It may be that because of the repositionings taking place, the atmosphere of coercion dominating the universities and other cultural institutions will eventually begin to dissipate. In the meantime, disavowals of anti-humanism, anti-canonicity, or anti-traditionalism deserve skeptical scrutiny. Rather than being signs that the prodigals are returning to the fold, these retreats tend to be self-serving gestures calculated to preserve rather than weaken prevailing coercive orthodoxies.

Coming in

Partisan Review:

- Robert Wistrich: *Reshaping Israeli Identity*
- Roger Shattuck on Melville and Camus
- Walter Laqueur: *The Congress of Cultural Freedom*
- Dorothea Straus on Carlo Levi
- Tsvetan Todorov: *The Labor of Love*
- Jenny Teichman on Hilary Putnam

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FICTION

LEONARD KRIEGEL

Immigrants

"He give me," the old man says.

"You asked him? Just like that? And he gave it to you?"

The woman stares at the old man as if she doesn't believe him. She does believe him, but she cannot keep the incredulity out of her voice.

"I asked him. Once. And he give me. Just like that. Yes."

The old man's voice sounds youthful, victorious. But the old man's face looks even older than the seventy-four years he has been alive. His face is the face of a man in his late eighties – ridges and lines, as if a stone cutter had methodically chipped away at it down all the years of his life. A face never finished, the woman thinks. She would like to tell the old man that his face has never been finished. She would like to tell him what fascinates her about his face is that it reminds her of a half-finished painting with gray empty splotches. But she says nothing to the old man. Instead, she tells herself that someday she will put the face on canvas where it will stare out on the world, forever unfinished.

"It's amazing, isn't it?"

"What?" the old man says. "What's amazing?"

"The whole thing," the woman says, the breath of concern still kissing her voice. The woman stirs her coffee with a bent back spoon, its handle twisted so that her right forefinger presses against the side of the stem to keep it balanced. The woman drinks her coffee black, without sugar. But she likes the stirring motion and she likes staring down at the dark gyrations.

"Twenty-five thousand," the man says, nodding.

"Twenty-five thousand," the woman repeats, still stirring the coffee with her bent spoon.

"And that was real money in them days," the old man adds, triumphantly. "Remember, we're talking more than thirty years back, Alicia."

"And he asked no security in return."

"Nothing," the old man says. "Not a red cent."

"Nothing," the woman repeats. She shakes her head. "It's hard to believe."

She is a very attractive woman and she looks at least ten years

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younger than her forty-two years. She sits up straight against the green vinyl booth, the small of her back as flat as she can make it. She is a woman who has learned how to sit with discipline, the way she was taught as a young girl in Prague. When a good-looking woman sits straight, it is difficult to tell that she is short. That had been the first of her mother's lessons, boxed in now among other enduring homilies of childhood. She sits as straight as a birch against the green vinyl of the booth, aware of how good-looking she is, her head of curly hair so silver-blond it springs into the air like clusters of Christmas ribbons curled beneath the polished neon light of the coffee shop. She is the kind of woman who likes the way she looks in a coffee shop where even the harsh light flatters her fine skin.

And why shouldn't she like the way she looks? There are many good-looking women in New York coffee shops, but this particular good-looking woman is wearing a cherry red ski jacket with a white rabbit collar, the same jacket she wore when she entered the coffee shop with the old man forty minutes earlier. Only the jacket is now draped across her shoulders. Twenty minutes earlier, she had opened the jacket zipper. But she had not taken the jacket off. She likes to wear the red ski jacket draped across her shoulders so that the white turtleneck and her fullness show.

She concentrates now on her coffee, wondering whether anyone in the almost-empty coffee shop is watching her. She is used to being watched. Not only is she good-looking but she is a woman who can hold a cup of coffee inches away from her face, suspended in air in front of her lips, knowing without the confirmation of a mirror how appealing she is in her cherry red ski jacket with the white rabbit collar and the white turtleneck showing through and the coffee cup in front of her lipsticked red lips.

"It's peculiar when you think about it."

"You could do that in New York in them days," the old man says eagerly. "There was trust." Like his eyes and his forehead, the old man's cheeks are chiseled with lines and ridges, a contour map of flesh. The old man puckers his cheeks and blows air out in a sigh meant for the benefit of the good-looking woman. Then the old man wipes his mouth with the napkin and stares down at his empty cup of coffee. "It was different back then, Alicia. It was a different city, if you know what I mean."

"I wasn't here, Willie. How can I know what you mean?"

The old man pays no attention to her. He shakes his head, again blows air from his cheeks into the bright coffee shop. Through the window, he can see the snow falling on the avenue. But in the coffee shop it is warm and pleasant. The old man likes sitting in the coffee shop

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with this woman. "Maybe you'd like something more to eat, Alicia?" he asks. The old man might be taken for the father of the good-looking woman. Thinking of that pleases him. He has no children. "Some dessert? Maybe you'd like a slice of the apple pie. They got real good apple pie here, or a piece of Danish, maybe."

"I'm fine, Willie," the woman says, coffee cup still suspended in front of her handsome face.

"I just thought, you know. A ham and cheese and a cup of coffee. . . ." The old man shrugs. "Not a big lunch, is it?" The old man does not look at the good-looking woman he now wishes people would take for his daughter. He is sorry he never had children. He is sorry he never married. The old man's eyes are on the light beige coffee cup the good-looking woman holds in front of her and then his eyes nervously shift to the front of the store where the Greek owner is sitting behind the cash register, staring out at the avenue.

The Greek owner is in his early fifties. He has been in America for nineteen years and has owned this New York coffee shop for the last eight. He is also the Greek owner of a two-family wood-frame house in Astoria, Queens, where he rents out the back as a separate apartment with its own entrance and kitchen. He rents it to a smiling Pakistani and his silent wife and twin infant daughters. The Pakistani's wife speaks no English and when the Greek owner meets her coming out of the house she rushes past him, eyes cast down on the Astoria pavement.

The Greek owner lives in the front of the house with his small dark-haired wife who talks but who will never lose her Salonikan accent. Their two grown children live with them, a son who is studying to be a pharmacist at St. John's, who runs around with too many girls and plays loud music the Greek owner hates and grudgingly helps out at the coffee shop on weekends, and a daughter the Greek owner thinks is very beautiful who plays the piano well enough so that she can study at Julliard, where at this very moment, she is rehearsing an especially difficult Chopin étude under the watchful gaze of a Hungarian professor who would like to fuck her.

But the Greek owner of the coffee shop is unaware of the Chopin étude and the Hungarian professor who wants to fuck his daughter. He stands behind the register on this cold afternoon in mid-January and he is not thinking about his Pakistani tenants in Astoria or his small wife and her Salonikan accent or his college boy son at St. John's who cannot keep his cock between his legs or his beautiful daughter who is playing the piano for some Hungarian at Julliard. He is thinking that it is two-thirty in the afternoon and another lunch has come and gone and it has

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been another bad afternoon for a Greek owner of a Chelsea coffee shop who must stand like a statue behind the cash register.

And he is remembering that when he still lived in Greece and dreamed of America he would read guide books about New York. And all of the books began, "New York is a city of immigrants." Only now, in this city of immigrants, there are many other Greek coffee shops and many other Greek coffee shop owners. Thirty years ago, New York coffee shops were owned by Jews. But the Jews moved on, to Mamaroneck and Great Neck, and the Greeks now owned the coffee shops.

The Greek owner of the coffee shop sighs. In the library of a well-known university in California, there are already two M. A. theses explaining why Greeks replaced Jews as owners of New York coffee shops. But he does not know this. Even if he did, it would not matter that one thesis proves that Greeks and Jews are similar immigrant groups and the other proves that no two immigrant groups are more different than Greeks and Jews.

Both agree that not all Greeks are the same and not all Greek owners of coffee shops are the same. This Greek coffee shop owner knows he is different. He has thought a great deal about what makes him different and he has decided that he is more sensitive than other Greek coffee shop owners are. At this moment, he is wondering what new specials he should try to attract more customers. Despite the snow, he can see into the Burger King across the avenue. The Burger King is still more than half-full at two-thirty in the afternoon. His coffee shop contains only the old man who comes in every day and the good-looking woman in a cherry red ski jacket he has not seen before and a man and a woman sitting at the counter.

The Greek owner sighs. He does not want to think about women. He does not want to think about what his son does. He must think about why those two in a booth at the rear and the two people sitting at the counter, a man almost as old as the man in the booth and a woman of fifty with dyed red hair cascading down her shoulders, are the only customers in his coffee shop.

The Greek owner watches and thinks. He watches the Mexican busboy hunched over a plate in the last booth to the rear, next to the air-conditioning unit. The last booth is intended for those times the coffee shop gets busy. Only now it is used for the Mexican busboy's lunch. The Mexican busboy is eating pot roast and string beans and mashed potatoes. The Greek owner does not begrudge the Mexican busboy his

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lunch. The Mexican busboy is a good boy. He works hard, he does not complain. The Mexican busboy has no papers or else he is waiting for his papers. The Greek owner does not want to know which. He only wants to know why his coffee shop is empty and the Burger King across the avenue is half-full.

The Greek owner turns his eyes from the Mexican busboy to the woman with the cascading dyed red hair. Every few minutes, the red-headed woman's shoulders spasm, a sudden jerk that the Greek owner nervously watches in the mirror behind the counter she faces. It occurs to him that this woman is crazy. The Greek owner wonders whether sitting in his coffee shop right now is one of those crazies who live on the streets and who come in and drink coffee and eat and then get up and walk out without paying, the ones who talk to themselves and slash invisible knives at the empty air. It has happened to him before and when he complains to his college boy son, he is met by a shrug. "It's the price of doing business in New York, Pop. You have to factor it into your costs. Like electricity."

Only why should he pay for the world's misery? He works hard, he pays his children's tuition, his portions are generous, and even if he sometimes thinks about it he does not mess around with other women. He shakes his head, then glances furtively at the woman with dyed red hair at the counter. The Greek owner takes comfort in the fact that the woman is dressed well, even if her shoulders spasm. On the stool next to the stool she is sitting on lies a black wool coat. The coat looks expensive. She is dressed in a knit green outfit with brown wooden buttons down the front. Not a shabby woman. Despite jerking shoulders and dyed red hair, she does not smell bad either. A hopeful sign, he reminds himself. Street people smell of piss and shit and unwashed flesh.

"It must have been a different city," the good-looking woman says to the old man. She smiles. Teeth white and even, her smile is as perfect as a good-looking woman's smile should be. "It's hard for me to get a picture of New York then." She tugs at the white rabbit collar as if she felt a sudden chill. But it is warm and bright in the coffee shop. "When was it he gave you the money?"

"Lent," the old man corrects. "He lent me."

"Lent," the woman repeats. She accepts the correction with a shrug. Lent is a word. That is all it is, a word.

"In 1962. End of April. A warm spring that year. You don't get warm springs in New York no more. I don't know why. I had a tip. A killing at Belmont. Spring was always the killing time. You go to the track, you make a day of it in spring." He pauses, voice quivering. "It's

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beautiful there, Alicia. Maybe you'll let me take you?"

"And when it's winter?"

"I bet with the bookies in winter. But they got this OTB now." The old man pauses. "On Seventeenth Street. Next to the Jewish Synagogue."

"But then you went yourself? With money he lent you."

"I went myself. With his money," he admits. "I even remember the name of the horse. Like remembering your murderer." The old man laughs, creased face creasing even more. His laugh is sharp, a cackle. He is pleased at the idea of the murderer horse. "Kelly's Hawk. That was the horse's name. Kelly's Hawk. How can I forget? Twenty-five thousand and my life on the line."

The good-looking woman laughs, too. But her laugh is temperate, a musical laugh. "It's amazing when you think of it. How different our worlds were. I was still in Prague, living with my sister. Karla was in her fourth year at the university. I had a job. At night I painted, and during the day I worked as a guide. For tourists. Only Russians visited Prague in 1967." She laughs again. "They like our beer, the Russians." She leans forward, rewards the old man with a smile that explodes in front of him.

The old man turns his face away. He feels agitated, hopeful. He keeps his eyes away from her face. "You didn't know Frantisek then, did you?" he asks, eyes again coming to rest on the Greek owner behind the register.

The woman shakes her head. "You paid him back?"

"Everything," the old man answers.

"Everything?"

"Every last cent. I would give him interest, too. But Frantisek tells me, 'No, Willie, I don't take no interest from no fellow Czech.' " Tears well up in the corners of the old man's eyes. "You can't do that in New York today."

"It's amazing you could pay it all back."

"Whenever I got, I pay. All of it. I pay it all back. Business is good, business is bad. It don't matter. People was still wearing furs in them days, Alicia. You could make a dollar. That don't matter either. If I got to rob a bank to pay him back, I do it. Your man was a saint, Alicia. A saint." The old man dabs at his eyes with his crumpled blue napkin. Then he blows his nose and the woman thinks his lined cheeks will crack and break away from his face like pieces of broken crockery. Why should a woman as good-looking as she be reduced to picking splinters of flesh off a coffee shop table and then gluing them back together?

The woman smiles invitingly. She remembers that she must try to make the old man happy. This is what old men have instead of sex. How

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many old men in New York can have lunch with a woman as good-looking as she is? "How long did it take?"

"For what?" the old man asks suspiciously.

"To pay him back."

"Every cent I gave him." He is becoming more agitated. "Two hundred one week, four hundred the next. It took two years. But I gave it back, every penny. I would give interest, too. Only he don't take no interest from another Czech."

"He was my mother's second cousin. We knew he was in America. That was all we knew." She laughs. "If you knew someone in America back then, it was magic. You only told close friends. But it was as if you could look down and there it was, like a gold watch lying in the street." She sips her coffee, tosses her head back so that her silver blond curls explode. The old man can smell her warmth. He trembles. She could have been his daughter. "Like something valuable. Only you couldn't pawn it, because they would find out. Yet it made you richer, just the fact that you knew someone in America."

"He was a good Czech," the old man says.

"He was a Jew, Willie. I know. I married him."

"What difference? When I needed money, he gave me. You ask me, he was a good Czech."

The Mexican busboy sits back in the booth and lights a cigarette. He has finished the pot roast and mashed potatoes and string beans and he has drunk two cups of coffee and the clock on the wall says he still has four minutes on his break before he must mop the imitation wood floor of the coffee shop. The Mexican busboy cannot read English but he can tell time and he regularly reads *El Diario* each morning at breakfast.

The Mexican busboy is happy. He is happy because here he is, in New York, the greatest city in the world – and his stomach is full, he is smoking a cigarette, he is looking at a painting on the wall above the last booth. The painting is of a woman with a flowery print dress and white parasol. The woman stands on a sun-filled beach. In the distance is the blue ocean and there are two sailboats on the ocean and the woman is very lovely and she is also dressed in a style that pleases the Mexican busboy. He cannot get over how rich a country this America is, where an ordinary Greek can buy a painting of a lovely woman on the beach.

He takes another drag on his cigarette, afraid he may explode with pleasure. He is pleased to be inside a coffee shop in New York working for a Greek owner. He is pleased to be warm and he is pleased that the

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Greek owner does not begrudge him the food he eats and he is pleased that the two boys from his hometown with whom he shares a room on Allen Street must come home each night after a day of standing outside subway stops selling roses from their native Mexico. Even on cold days in winter. He crushes the cigarette in the saucer, ready to mop the floor, happy in America.

At the register, the Greek owner is trying to narrow his focus to the exact spot on the head of the woman with the dyed hair where the gray roots and red dye join. He wonders what it would be like to make love to her. He has promised his wife to bring a pound of cod home for dinner. The remembered promise irritates him. Outside snow falls. He closes his eyes. He wishes it would snow harder. He wishes he could spend the night here, in his coffee shop, near the woman with the dyed red hair.

The good-looking woman has decided to give the old man whatever he wants. Frantisek is dead, Prague is in Europe, and she is a good-looking woman who needs enough money to keep her life unchanged. Besides, maybe she can convince the old man to let her paint his portrait. She would like that. She would like to leave the portrait unfinished.

"I went back to Prague," she says. "After he died."

"I wish I could help," the old man says. "It must be a terrible thing to face alone. Let me help, Alicia."

"I don't like European men anymore," the woman says. "I can't live that way. Not after the years here."

"Frantisek dying like that," the old man says. "The pain, I mean. It would have been easier if it was a heart."

"There's no night life. I went to Wenceslas Square. Empty. Just hippies. They steal. Like over here." The good-looking woman sighs, zips her red ski jacket up. Maybe it will be enough simply to stroke him a little, to talk to him. Maybe it will not be so bad. The old man has money now. "They watch television. No night life. And the way they dress." The good-looking woman shakes her head in exasperation. "The only time I went to the theater, I wore a white sweater and blue jeans. Not even a piece of costume jewelry." She touches the old man's hand. The hand lies flat, unmoving. "Is it time to go, Willie?"

The old man looks at the good-looking woman as if he were noticing her for the first time. "It was Kennedy loused the county up. With that immigration law. The people who built this country were Europeans, like us. But he give preference to all them Caribbeans."

"It's time, Willie, the woman says. "I'll take you home. We'll have

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a drink when we get home."

"He was Catholic, like us. But he made a mess. He loused the country up."

"It's time."

"You can't even ride the goddamn subway anymore!" the old man cries.

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Poems

HORACE

iii. 28
To Lyde

What could be better to do on Neptune's day?
Lyde, go fetch the Caecuban wine, and hurry.
Let's strike a blow for folly. The sun is setting

And yet you tarry as if the hour stands still –
Bring out that jar of vintage wine from the cellar,
The one that dates from Bibulus' consulship.

We'll sing some songs together on the shore:
First I the one about the god of the sea
And the green-haired nymphs, the Nereids; then you,

In reply, will sing, accompanied by the lyre,
The hymn to Latona and fleet Diana, and fleet
Diana's arrows; and then the one about

The Queen of the shining Cyclades,
The Queen of Cnidos, and how she comes to visit
Cyprian Paphos, drawn by her yoke of swans;

And then a song appropriate to the dark.

I. 17
To Tyndaris

Sometimes Faunus comes from Arcady
To fair Lucretilis, and while he's here
Sees to it that my goats are sheltered from
The summer heat and from the wind and rain.

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Tyndaris, when this place falls under the spell
Of the rocks and hills of Ustica echoing
The sound of Faunus playing upon his pipe,
The wives of the rank male goat then feeling easy

Can wander through the woods in safety searching
For thyme and for arbutus where they hide,
Nor do the kids have anything to fear
From snakes nor from Mars' favorite, the wolf.

The gods protect me here because they know
That I and my Muse are ever devout and faithful.
And here, for you, from the horn of plenty flow
All the good things of our local fields and vines.

Here you can shade yourself from the heat of summer,
Singing a song about Penelope
And Circe of the glassy sea, and how
Both of them loved the wandering Ulysses.

Here you will sit, under these guardian plane trees,
Tasting the mild innocent wine of Lesbos;
Here Mars and Bacchus, Semele's child, will never
Contend to make trouble; and, untroubled here,

Watched over, here in the garden, under these trees,
You will have nothing to fear from jealous Cyrus,
Tearing your dress, or disarranging your hair,
Pawing you with his cruel offending hands.

II. 1
To Pollio

Do not be absent long from the tragic stage,
Pollio, famous for this, and famous too
For your victory in Dalmatia, and for wise
Counsel in the councils of the Senate,

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And for the defense of those accused in court.
Now you are setting out to tell the story
Of the civil wars that began so long ago,
In the consulship of Metellus: the ways they happened,

The reasons for the wars, the mistakes that were made,
The consequences of friendships of the great ones,
All the blood shed that to this day's unpaid for.
What you are undertaking is full of danger.

Fire burns under the ashes you walk on.
Even now I seem to hear the raucous sound
Of the war horns in the music you create.
The deafening noise of trumpets fills my ear.

I see the javelins and swords, the shields,
The helmets, and the shining breastplates. I see the terror
In the terrified horses' faces, and I see
The terror in the faces of their riders.

I hear the exhortations of the captains
Covered with not inglorious filth; I see
The world brought down by Roman arms, in spite
Of Cato's virtuous stubbornness of heart.

Helpless to help, Juno and all the gods
Allied with her to favor Africa
From Africa had withdrawn their help, and then
Renewed the offer with the sacrifice

Of the bodies of the grandsons of the victors,
As tribute to the African, Jugurtha.
What field is there that isn't fertilized
With Roman blood, where Roman graves bear witness

To the impiety of Romans fighting Romans?
Witness the noise of Hesperia's crashing fall,
Pleasing the ears of the Parthian enemy
Who heard it on the other side of the world.

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What standing pool is there, what flowing river,
That doesn't know what Roman blood tastes like?
Where is it where the foam of breaking waves
Doesn't leave the stain of Roman blood in the sand?

My wandering Muse, find us a hiding-place
From such a story and from such a music,
Some grotto or some cavern Venus-blessed,
Where I can play a lighter tune than this.

Translated from the Latin by David Ferry

GEORGE KALOGERIS

Cavafy

Was it on rue Lepsius, not far from the Gate
of the Moon, you lived downstairs from a whorehouse
and heard the procession climbing the steps as night
descended and young men began to carouse
Alexandria's seedy outskirts, where you turned sixty;
a part-time clerk engrossed in Apollonius
and Plutarch, you swore gods passed through the hallway –
though none paid you a visit. Vague passages,

and yet such loud commotion on the stairs
could start the traffic passing overhead,
that vulgar singing troupe, so many figures
rising and descending the more you read
you weren't sure if the drunken, laughing youth
outside your door was real, imagined – or both.

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C. P. CAVAFY

Horace in Athens

Who enters Leah's chamber, what young man
nearing her double bed of wealth and elegance
offers the hetaera a spray of jasmine
now, the gleam of brilliant gems on his hands?

His tunic's made of finely-woven white silk
bordered with a red, oriental pattern;
but even though his speech is pure Attic,
still the slightest accent of native Latin

taints his flawless Greek with a trace of the Tiber.
Yet so quietly the Athenian listens
to this Horace, her eloquent new lover,

you might think a breeze had parted silk curtains
and new worlds of beauty were dawning on her,
so intently she listens to the great Italian.

Translated from the Greek by George Kalogeris

OVID

The Poet's Epigram
(or: *The Work Speaks for Itself*)

-Amores, I. 1

We who were until now the five short books of Naso
here become three: The author prefers this arrangement
to the former. So even if we don't stimulate you, at least
with two books missing we'll appear less tedious.

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I.

I was putting together a story full arms and the violent
din of war, a fashionable topic.
I'd kept it up through the second stanza when Cupid
(as he often does) with a laugh stole away one foot.
"Rude, savage boy, who made you the watch-dog of verse?
We poets belong to the Pierides, not to your derelict band.
What if Venus made off with ashen-haired Minerva's weapons?
Minerva couldn't fan the flames of love!
Could anyone picture Ceres ruling the mountain forests
or Chaste Diana tending the crops?
Who would let Apollo near a sword, in all his golden-haired glory,
while Mars strummed along on the lyre?
Ambitious boy, you're far too influential in your own domain:
Why are you pestering me in mine?
Or does everything belong to you, even the valleys of Helicon?
You'd snatch Apollo's lyre from his hands!
My poem was going along just fine until your interference
sapped its strength. Anyway, I have no
subject suited to this light tone, no boys
or comely, long-haired maidens."
That was my complaint, then Cupid untied his quiver
and took out arrows designed for me.
Bending down, he crooked his sinuous bow and teased,
"Here Poet, try writing about this!"

Poor me! That boy had terrific aim: I've been struck
with a love that devours my heart.
So let these verses open with six beats and close with five:
So long, you stylish rhythms of war!
Weave garlands of myrtle around your yellow, shore-loving
temples, O Muse: If we have to, we'll sing in elevens!

Translated from the Latin by Catherine Salmons

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RACHEL HADAS

Greek Gold

Metropolitan Museum of Art, December 1994
for Joan Mertens

Penises erect if you stoop to squinny,
two rams nose to nose on a golden bracelet
face off. That their bodies have been distilled to
heads, genitalia

gives the leaps fresh urgency. A demotic
tarnished silver version I bought in Delphi
used to catch my delicate wrist-skin in be-
tween the two muzzles.

Stoically I suffered this painful pinching
for some years; then didn't. My left wrist wore a
watch; the other hand seemed best unencumbered:
I might be writing.

Eros, next, astride a plump dove. Or rather
Erotes, for these are a pair of pendant
earrings. Worn, they both would have swayed, suspended,
the baby rider

leaning forward eagerly, rocking, bobbling,
shadows shifting, cheek onto neck and shoulder
of the wearer at the least hint of motion.
And what is trembling

over here? The earrings sat still; they only
swayed in the soft gusts of imagination.
But this wreath, gold foil, with its oakleaves, acorns,
bee, and cicadas,

faintly shudders even beneath protective
panes of glass: the ahh a bewitched beholder
might expel? A breath from beyond the gallery
stolidly guarded?

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No. This subtle quiver inheres in golden
foil and wire we bend to, not in us gazers,
and above all not in what's called the Real World
beyond the doorway.

Leave the bees half hidden in trembling foliage.
Monumental, in an adjacent corner,
an ornate Italian amphora offers
white-heightened paintings.

Here's Achilles perched on a little campstool.
Patiently he waits for his new-forged armor
to be handed up to him by the helpful
sea-nymphs his mother

can command. This nereid holds his helmet;
that one pulls a greave from an unseen warehouse;
still another, parasol-wielding, rides a
genial dolphin.

Look and look again. Yes, the parasol is
thrust (what insouciance!) through the dolphin's blowhole.
Do real dolphins have blowholes? Is the last nymph
riding sidesaddle?

I no longer know. But I do remember
overhearing two tourguides. First (to children):
"Is Achilles dressing to go to dinner?
What are they bringing?"

"Helmet! Shield!" the children reply in chorus.
No one minds, apparently, that he's naked.
Then the second, speculating to adults:
"Seal-rings so tiny

and details so fine that the master craftsmen
must have employed children." Or were the master
sculptors, carvers, miniaturists, myth-mongers
all of them children?

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If so, taste not just of the time dictated
these winged, bird-footed, lion-pawed Gorgons, Sphinxes,
rampant rams, this chuckling dove-jockey godling,
but of the makers.

The consumers manifestly were adult.
Were and are. They wore the work of child labor;
gape at these glass cases; buy in the gift shop
facsimiles – oh,

fairly good, yet lackluster once adorning
creatures such as us: big, unwieldy, mortal,
who eat, sleep, age, worry, and linger over
representations

of what never was and what is eternal.
Small deft fingers endlessly reinvented
idioms of ornament that translated
myth into human

artifact and image. The first enchantment
lingers still in copies from my poor bracelet
(now long vanished) to the ones on display here.
I pass them, leaving

realms of gold, realms mythic and precious, priceless,
for the precincts (how huge and dim they seem now)
of the rest of the Museum first; then stairs; and then Fifth
Avenue. Winter.

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CATULLUS

Brother

Multas per gentes . . . frater

CATULLUS

Driven through people and people and places
I am come to this terrible service brother
so I might give you your last gift the death gift
might talk to your ashes might listen in vain for their voice
Since your life took you from me seized you
unjust brother misery took you from me
now as we were taught by our parents here
I offer my last gift a death gift
take it wrapped only in brotherly tears
and always my brother now I have found you farewell

Translated from the Latin by Marcia Karp

JAMES LAUGHLIN

The Gods

The Aphorisms
Books V, VI & VII
HIPPOCRATES

are diseased It's pandemic. All
that mead they've been drinking
night and day up there on Olympus.
It has sickened their bodies to
the point of putrefaction, and
turned their minds into cesspools.
They've forgotten their responsi-
bilities for us earthlings. Our

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fates no longer mean anything to them.
Tell me Euparchus, my learned friend,
were they any better in chaos, when
the first of them were formed out
of the void of nothingness? I think
you once told me that when their
sickness became notable, clever
Hermes, the messenger, came down to
fetch up the great physician Hippo-
crates, hoping that he could diag-
nose and cure the divine ones.

Hippocrates examined a number of
them, male and female. He was
appalled at what he discovered.
In his Medical Aphorisms he set
down the following illnesses:
lientery, anasarca, stangury
various suppurations, phrenitis,
putrid eructations, erysipelas,
dysuria, pustules of scabies,
quartan fever, empyema, ileus,
bloody flux, sphacelus, and
other diseases which he had
never encountered before.
Euparchus, I asked, with all
these terrible plagues why are
all the gods not dead?

The gods are immortal, Euparchus
answered, how can they die when
they are immortal. Unless the
world ends they will go on tor-
menting us forever.

Is there nothing we can do to
protect ourselves from their
vindictive malice?

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All I can suggest, and probably
it will do no good, is to ignore
the gods. Let's give up on the
costly sacrifices to beseech
a mercy that no longer exists.
I shall lustrate myself for
them no more.

That evening after Euparchus
had gone something began to
itch at the back of my bad
memory. Hadn't I once seen
a denigration of the gods in
the kollemata of Tantalus
of Sidon in the Palatine
Library at Heidelberg? My
memory is unreliable, but
hadn't Tantalus written
something like this?
αἳ δὲ ψυχαὶ αὐτῶν μήχαναι εἰσὶ
ἀλλήλοις ἐπὶ ταῖς διαφθειρίαις ἡδοναῖς
"Their souls were only instruments
of each others' dissolute pleasures."

MARK RUDMAN

Role Play
(after Horace, *Odes*, Book 1, 4, and 37)

1. On location. Set off from real life by an artificial
world yet part of life – ?

2. The set: a lovesick empire in the heat
during the long shoot in the Spanish hills.

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3. The stillness of waiting is broken only
when a sunstruck actor, encased in his tin

shell of armor, clattered to the ground
sweat oiling the skin from underneath the thin

film of Vaseline applied to simulate sweat.
The budget swelled like dropsy.

4. Excess without wisdom. And yet
the public loved to hear about the real

love that flared on the world's
stage between the long-adored actress

(from the ingenue's "pre-erotic sentience")
and the upstart mecurical Welshman.

5. Love isn't a bad way to go when the cells of
the body politic are still

stunned by a regicide in which the victim
had no time to display

Cleopatra's uncommon courage . . . and fix
one serene final gaze on the reeling globe.

6. (Horace could not force the future
to listen when he warned: *wind*

shakes the tallest pine, lightning
strikes the highest tower . . .).

7. Why finish the film, why get out
of the characters whose passion,

mythic, wild, unbugeted,
rivaled their own

when they could go on
falling forever in the

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unsteady, giddy, delirious
gleam of that freedom?

8. They became the roles they played.
But like those lovers who came before

they fell prey to . . . magical thinking . . .
and thought: *if we ignore the world*

and make a new life in a far off place
it will . . . leave us alone.

9. The tabloids covered their every move:
and from here on in, whether spear-fishing

the Technicolor coral reefs off Puerto Vallarta
after Burton was done

with his whiskey-priest role in

Night of the Iguana

or taking each other on the hot white sand,
or whirling in the local cantinas, high

on atomic margueritas, (Cuervo
Gold, Cointreau, ice and lime) *nunc*

est bibendum, they could not shake the un-
easy feeling you get when you're being watched,

and your behavior, in ways you cannot
measure, is . . . : changed.

10. But *learning how to make the best of it*
is the whole . . . and there were

compensations; the small,
prelapsarian coastal town

was not a bad place to fall;
the streets smelled sweet after rains,

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the noon sun shone through
the emerald green of iguanas;

and the smoked fish on sticks
hawked for centavos by peasant children

running barefoot up and down the beach
could not be beat: at any price.

PETER FILKINS

Now and Then

James Merrill (1926-1995)

Midway through this morning
a helicopter throbs,
disrupting a cloudless sky
that lights the downward look
I've cast, once more, with pleasure
into the pages of your book.

It is June, four months later
on that installment plan
we all sign up for, now and then
remembrance demanding we pay
the bill, remit our loss,
your "Farewell Performance" that day

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a detour on the syllabus
sadly taken, then embraced
in the hope that you'd reprise
us with your brilliant act,
though knowing, gentle conjurer,
all magic ends in fact.

Or does it? Above, the chopper
whirs. I can feel its pulse
press the canopy of leaves
pliant as a damask curtain
that, sweeping back, reveals
a child to a world of passions

rehearsed in the home he feels
as rigged as it is broken,
where Wotan's stormy bass,
Brünnhilde on the pyre
threaten to engulf him,
but don't, becoming the fire

that lit your art from within
its self-sustaining flame:
opera, child, curtain,
loss, an open book –
all fair game in the consuming
glance, the upward look

that hovers here this morning,
wiser, no less scattered,
knowing life the richer for you
and . . . look, a glint of sun?
no, wait . . . the pilot's waving!
as he passes and is gone.

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MARK KURLANSKY

The Italian Connection

As though to prove he was going nowhere, Berlin-born Erich Priebke, eighty-three, worked out every day for more than a year on a stationary bicycle, while he was under house arrest in Buenos Aires pending a decision on an Italian request for extradition.

Italy and Argentina share more than an extradition treaty. So many Italians have emigrated to Argentina over the years that Italian surnames are more common than Spanish, and Argentine Spanish has acquired an Italian lilt. In Argentina's obsessive, unsuccessful, and somewhat racist quest to be European and not South American, Italy, along with Germany and England, is one of its role models.

Unfortunately, among the concepts adopted from Italy is the idea of unaccountable government. The past is to remain in the past, with the hope that if it does, then peace and stability may come to a nation threatened by destabilizing polarity. This is how Italy tried to get past Mussolini and how Argentina is trying to get past the Dirty War. But people need to believe that there is a moral order to the universe, a power that can set right the sins which they felt too powerless to prevent. How else can they live with their failure to have acted? As churches have clearly failed to provide this leadership, great revolutions – the American, the French, the Russian, the Chinese – claimed to offer a new code of morality.

The failure of secular leadership such as Marxism, Maoism, French Republicanism and Americanism to assert a moral order is driving people back to religion. Without a sense of moral imperative, what legitimacy is there to law? The notion of justice is not that transgressors are locked up because they are dangerous. People want them locked up because they have done wrong. Guilt is the sense that one has not paid for one's crimes. The political argument often assumes that the society will more easily rebuild if it forgets about the crimes of the past. But then people feel they are living in a society without justice, where wrong goes unpunished; where all are guilty at heart and the ruling system is pointless.

Erich Priebke's unanswered guilt paralyzed two nations. Italy felt too guilty not to ask for him but too guilty to really look at his crimes, and Argentina was too guilty to judge him but too guilty to let him go. In the end Germany, the most improbable *deus ex machina,* a nation

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that tries to face guilt but has too much of it to face in entirety, stepped in.

On March 24, 1944, in retaliation for a partisan bombing in central Rome that killed thirty-three Germans, three hundred thirty Italians were rounded up to be shot within twenty-four hours, ten Italians for every dead German. When the round-up of political prisoners and miscellaneous "suspects" did not yield enough people, seventy Jews were picked up to fill the quota.

The hostages were taken to the Ardeatine Caves off the Appian Way, south of the capital. Hands bound behind their backs, prisoners were forced to stand five at a time on the corpses of the previous victims and were shot in the backs of their heads, while Captain Priebke checked their names off a list. SS Commander Colonel Herbert Kappler had calculated that they could make their deadline if they took no more than one minute for each victim. But things got sloppy, partly because the executioners were so visibly sickened by their task that Kappler decided to get them drunk on cognac. It took up to four bullets per victim, the SS sometimes firing away until the head was literally blown off. Priebke personally shot two. When it was over he reported to Kappler that they had miscalculated and killed three hundred thirty-five instead of three hundred thirty.

After the war, two Italian officials were executed for complicity in the crime. But the purge did not last long. Kappler's death sentence was later commuted to life in an Italian prison. In 1977 he escaped to die in Germany. Allegedly, though understandably few believe this story, his wife smuggled him out in a suitcase. Eric Priebke vanished from a British prisoner-of-war camp in 1946.

The decision to let the guilty escape and drop the subject has crippled Italy and much of Europe for a half century. Argentina seems determined to repeat Europe's mistakes. The young Argentine democracy, instead of building an exuberant new society, is paralyzed with guilt and cynicism.

During a military dictatorship from 1976 until 1983, thirty thousand people were tortured and murdered in the name of anti-Communism. It was called the Dirty War, although there was no war. After democracy was re-established in 1983, attempts at a purge were abandoned as they were considered too dangerous, and the subject was dropped in the name of national reconciliation. Of the thirty thousand missing, only 9,250 have been accounted for. After a series of trials, convictions, commutations, pardons and amnesties, the total punishment for the Dirty War has been brief prison terms for two officers. The end of the trials came when the first elected president, Raul Alfonsin responded to a 1988

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military rebellion by granting amnesty to four hundred officers on the grounds that they were obeying orders. The second president, Carlos Menem, facing another military rebellion, granted amnesties to the remaining officers, and pardons for the two serving sentences.

Like Mussolini and Fascism in Italy, the Dirty War keeps popping up in Argentina at inconvenient moments, chronically bogging down the national dialogue. In the first few years of democracy it popped up – quite literally. Mass graves were repeatedly stumbled upon – sixty-eight unmarked and unexplained bodies in a pit discovered in Benavidez, twenty bodies that surfaced in a lake in Cordoba, bodies bobbing up in the Rio de la Plata that divides Buenos Aires from Uruguay and is so wide it looks like an ocean.

More recently, political life has been plagued by unsolicited confession. Retired naval captain Adolfo Scilingo said in February 1995 that up to 2,000 political prisoners were hurled into the Atlantic Ocean from navy aircraft in 1976-77. This led to increased demands for more information. The government released the names of 545 more disappeared victims of the Dirty War. Sounding like Charles deGaulle in postwar France, Menem complained, "Publicly coming forward to give testimony is a way of returning to a horrible past that we are trying to forget." He suggested that if officers felt the need for confession they should see a local priest. Nevertheless, other officers have come forward.

There is something perverse about guilt and shame. After the military stepped down in 1983, an officer named Alfredo Astiz used to go regularly to his favorite bar in the port of Bahia Blanca, relaxed and fearless while customers shivered with shame because they recognized him as their torturer. This is a familiar scene in bars, cafés and restaurants all over the country. Nowhere in Argentina do torturers fear being recognized, but psychiatrists have full case loads of victims who fear running into their torturers. Many cannot speak about their experiences, suffer chronic headaches, and insist they hear screams while listening to loud music.

It makes a comfortable environment for Nazi war criminals. In spite of regular requests by numerous governments over the years only two Nazis, out of thousands let in by the Juan Peron government after the war, have ever been extradited. The first, Gerhard Bohne, was extradited during a short-lived civilian government in 1966, and Franz Schwammberger is currently serving a life sentence in Germany after being turned over by Menem's government.

Menem has been opening some, but not all, files for public scrutiny. Though extradition requests are getting a more favorable reception, Argentine courts are still turning them down. When the pressure is on, the ruling party, which calls itself Peronist, would rather talk about

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Nazis than the Dirty War. Last Spring, when the Dirty War kept coming up during his successful re-election campaign, Menem would periodically make harsh statements about Priebke, demanding his rapid departure.

Priebke was a well-trained, well-mannered obsequious European hotel staffer – helpful in several languages, friendly but impersonal. When Hitler came to power in 1933 he joined the Nazi party and left the hotel business. As well as charming women, he interrogated and tortured with a terrifying coldness at SS headquarters on the Via Tasso in Rome. When Hitler was finished he got another hotel job, this time in Buenos Aires, never to be seen brutalizing, or for that matter womanizing, again.

Survivors were able to acquire two floors of the Via Tasso building to preserve as a museum. They could not get the rest because other cells had already been sold off as apartments at bargain prices. The late director of the museum, Arrigo Paladini, described the three times Priebke interrogated him. "He hit me in the chest with the brass knuckles that he used habitually on prisoners. . . . Distinct from the others, his language was not offensive or vulgar and he did not easily lose control." According to Paladini, Priebke's "appearance and behavior were stiff and cold and to those who didn't know he was a killer, this made him appear less ferocious and more humane than the others. In truth it was a more refined ferocity."

In the Andean town of San Carlos de Bariloche, Priebke and his wife and two sons opened a mom-and-pop deli. A thousand miles south of Buenos Aires, Bariloche was not founded until the end of the last century, by Germans from Chile, after the last of hostile indigenous tribes were defeated. On the shore of a sprawling cold mountain lake called Nuhuel Huapi, the architecture is Swiss and Bavarian, resembling an Alpine resort. In the lakeside village center is a small shopping mall. Its fountain is decorated with a circular concrete maze-like design of upside down crosses. The center of this geometric pattern is a large swastika.

The German community, which is the most talked-about, is comprised of only a few hundred citizens of Bariloche's total population of eighty thousand. There are larger Italian, Spanish and Croat communities – also nations with Fascist pasts. There are indigenous Indians and other South Americans, though they and the small Jewish community are never invited to participate in the annual cultural festival.

Priebke was always a little rigid with his old-fashioned German heel-clicking courtesy, but he was good with children. As a child Claudio Pezzuoli, who is now the president of the Italian community in

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Bariloche, liked to joke with the funny German man, but his mother would tell him to stay away from the Nazi. Tomas Buch, a Jewish refugee, who like Priebke is from Berlin, patronized the Vienna Deli. The Buch family used to joke, "Let's go buy some ham from the Nazi." The Italians also knew of his affiliation with the Nazi party. One prominent Italian in Bariloche kept a bust of Mussolini.

By the time of his arrest in 1994 Priebke was the long-standing president of the town's leading German institution, the German Argentine Cultural Association. After his arrest, his resignation was at first rejected by the board. Three days later it was accepted. Even without Priebke at least six out of thirteen members of the board of the German Argentine Cultural Association either have Nazi pasts or current Nazi associations, or are the children or spouses of people with Nazi pasts. The mainstream of the German community has followed Priebke's lead in simply avoiding public discussion about Nazism. Asked about his feelings about the Priebke case, German-born Horst Golisch, who replaced Priebke as president, responded, "We are not political."

Asked if he was not concerned that it was now widely believed that they had a Nazi in their midst, he answered, "I don't know what is meant by the word *Nazi*."

Nor have the Argentines known exactly how to react to the spectacle of this German pleading that he had merely obeyed orders. When Priebke was arrested the town counsel rejected a measure to condemn Nazism and express solidarity with the families of victims of the massacre. Councilman Norberto Simon argued, "We can't protect some and unprotect others." After two weeks of debate a modified version of the measure was passed.

The local Italian consul was so enthusiastic in his defense of his old friend Erich that the Italian government fired him. Many of the Italians and Croats, and even Spaniards, were never comfortable speaking about the past. Jews like Tomas Buch are subdued by the guilt of survival. There is too much guilt in this town for anyone to start shouting.

Priebke always talked freely about the massacre. Did he too feel the need for confession? On rare occasions he even told Italian friends about the one Italian he had killed in the cave – under orders, of course. When held by the British in 1946 he confessed to having killed two, but he never again talked about the second because it is not clear that he had orders for that one. He told everybody about the deeds for which he had orders. He described the massacre to reporters from the ABC television network, "It was a very harsh but justified reprisal." He added," My conscience is clean."

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In the spring of 1994 Priebke's television statements were brought to the attention of Italian President Silvio Berlusconi who, unlike Priebke, was not enjoying a clean conscience. Berlusconi was trying to explain to the world why he had formed the first European government in history to include neo-Nazis. Members of the National Alliance claim they have changed since the days when as the Italian Socialist Movement (MSI), they met up with other neo-Nazis in northern skinhead bars and traded Fascist salutes.

In Italy, the birthplace of Fascism, teachers in postwar schools labored over Roman times and discussed unification, but history seemed to stop after World War I. Nothing was taught about Mussolini and the singular event of World War II. All Italian school children learned about was this friendly deli keeper's "justified" reprisal. The group "Italian Martyrs Fallen for the Freedom of the Country," whose membership is comprised of the the families of victims of the Ardeatine caves, claims more than two thousand members and produces books and films about the massacre, arranges school field trips to the caves, and bathes itself in nationalistic imagery such as a shrouded corpse holding an Italian flag. It is Italy's unofficial designated World War II memory.

As a young girl, Giulia Spizzichino saw the truck drive up that took away seven of her relatives, Jews to fill the quota. Later another eighteen relatives were deported and killed in death camps. She had never even heard the name "Erich Priebke" until American television reporters asked her about him. Since learning of him, the case has been an obsession for her. In her many interviews with the Argentine and Italian press, she demonstrated little knowledge of the case. But while chatting in her modern Roman apartment about the upcoming Passover, she explained in an embarrassed whisper that for fifty years she has suffered recurring nightmares in which she sees her murdered cousins angrily accusing her of trying to forget them. A number of her friends have told her that it is abnormal to still be having these dreams decades later. "Maybe I am sick. But I can't forget."

How was it possible that she thought she was abnormal? I told her I knew Jewish people all over Europe who had nightmares like hers. She seemed surprised. At this point I noticed that tears were glittering in the eyes of her husband. He repeatedly said that he was not a Jew. Then he made the point that he was alive because he was not a Jew, but that his childhood friend who was Jewish had been taken away in front of him.

Meeting regularly in a shabby building near the Piazza Venezia, favored by the National Alliance because it was the site of Mussolini's rallies, others have the same nightmare as Spizzichino, that they might let the martyrdom of their fallen relatives be forgotten. The son of Michele

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Bolgia has a supply of photographs of his father's SS death notice which he passes out whenever he finds an occasion. The secretary for the organization is Nicoletta Leoni, thirty-three, granddaughter of the tenor Nicola Stame who was killed in the caves, his decomposed corpse identified by a pitch pipe found by Franco Zauli, a brother-in-law who is also active in the organization. Zauli's voice still quivers when describing the experience. Born in the sixties, Nicoletta has been coming to this office since she was taken there as a small child.

Like the mothers of the disappeared who still demonstrate every day in front of the presidential building in Buenos Aires, demanding that their dead children not be forgotten, these survivors of the Ardeatine cave massacre feel alone in spite of their public protest, because they are people with memories living in societies that are built on amnesia.

Berlusconi, with his five neo-Nazi ministers, demanded Priebke's extradition, and Menem, running for re-election with embarrassing Dirty War revelations, when he wasn't talking to a military crowd, said he was supportive. But then the Berlusconi government fell, and Menem succeeded in his re-election bid. The legal battle over Priebke went on, fought across the central Argentine political fault line. The Italian victims' association hired the Argentine lawyer Luis Moreno Ocampo, who first earned his reputation prosecuting military officers. When he prosecuted the leaders of a rebellion in December 1990, the defense attorney for the military was Pedro Bianchi, now representing Priebke.

Bianchi, whose client list includes not only rebellious military and former Nazis but also drug traffickers and mafia figures, is a bald and dapper seventy year-old with a black cane to help him with a bad leg that does not impede the boundless energy in his stocky broad-shouldered little body. At a Bariloche Rotary Club dinner I shared a table with Bianchi, Priebke's German-born daughter-in-law, Elizabeth, blonde with strong German features, and her two teenage daughters who look like skinny young copies of their mother. Also at the table was a mid-forties mother of two, who professed to be a great admirer of Priebke. An Argentine of German parents, when I asked her last name, wrote out "von Gebhardt de Hitler," then giggled and crossed out the last part. Late evening entertainment included a political ballad of the "Nueva Cancion" style popularized in Cuba in the sixties. It was about the disappeared in the Dirty War. The room was instantly divided by generation. The youth, like Priebke's granddaughters, seemed bored. Even Moreno Ocampo told me that he has never taught his children about the Dirty War. The older people looked either moved or uncomfortable. Unexpectedly, tears like big soft lenses formed over Von Gebhardt's eyes. She explained that two of her good friends were killed in the Dirty

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War. "They were political, I'm not." She felt guilty, not about her father and family friends and their roles in World War II but about surviving her student days during the Dirty War.

Then a tango called "We Are Not Bothered by Your Past" was dedicated to Erich Priebke. No one at my table laughed. A wild-eyed pianist, a dreamy guitarist, and an impassive accordion player moved the music in circles. Tangos seem endless because they start to build but then loop around to where they started. Finally Bianchi turned to me with his maniacal wide eyes and big smile and whispered, "Now this is torture."

Judge Eugenio Selvaggi, responsible for extradition matters in the Italian Ministry of Justice, insisted that his government was not interested in vengeance against Priebke. "We have to know the truth about the past so that it cannot be repeated."

That phrase is heard over and over in Italy these days. But not all of the truth is being sought. The indictment was meticulously limited to the Ardeatine caves massacre. There was to be nothing about Priebke's other alleged crimes, nothing about deportation of Jews, Via Tasso, Italian Fascism.

Ricardo Mancini, whose father was shot in the caves when Mancini was five, was arguing with Giovanni Gigliozzi, the president of the family-of-victims group. Gigliozzi was insisting that they had to push the government or the trial would never happen.

"What worries me," said Mancini, "is that right now, with a very strong right-wing party, a trial could be manipulated by the National Alliance." Mancini fears that they "can make Priebke become a martyr instead of a criminal. I think the association should continue what it is doing. Helping young people arrange visits to the caves."

Gigliozzi argued, "We must not forget history. If we remember we won't make the same mistakes. When Mussolini spoke to Italians and they shouted *Duce! Duce!* who could imagine that they would shoot people in caves?"

In discussions of a Priebke trial the word *manipulate* constantly comes up. Paladini's widow, Elvira Sabbatini, asked if she thought the government would be willing to have a trial that touched on the crimes of Italian Fascists or, for that matter, why it took fifty years to pursue a man listed in the telephone book, responded, "It won't come out. No one will know. Kappler escaped right under our eyes in a suitcase. Anything can happen in Italy."

But also, anything can happen in Argentina. Though the court ruled for extradition last May, in August the appeals court reversed the

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decision. Priebke was released from house arrest, Italians protested and sighed with relief, while in Argentina the same people who have been demanding a reckoning for the Dirty War angrily protested. Then one day later Priebke was re-arrested. Germany, which had quietly been preparing its own case, requested extradition.

More time passed with Priebke locked in his house, and finally in November, the Argentine Supreme Court, which is widely perceived as having been personally packed by Menem, had to give a long overdue ruling which was six to three in favor of extradition to Italy. Now it is in Italy's hands. In December, Priebke's initial hearing in Rome was enlivened by the relatives of victims shouting "murderer." The court considered the request of the relatives that they be allowed to attach their own civil suits to the safe and straightforward military case for which Priebke had been extradited. The court decided to delay any further action for at least two months.

Italy is well on its way to being a dysfunctional country mired with cynicism, possessed of a legal system that no one believes can deliver justice and a political system from which no one expects leadership. The nation's fifty years of corruption and instability stems from a conspiracy to build a modern nation by insisting that the only thing that happened in Italy between 1922 and the allied conquest or "liberation" of 1944 was the 335 Italians who were shot in a cave by the Germans. Argentina's new democracy is coming close to recreating the society that Italy built on Mussolini's ghost. In spite of nominal democracy there is growing cynicism about leadership, skepticism about the legal system and a growing inability to articulate a plausible national destiny. It is not by chance that Moreno Ocampo, having no more work prosecuting the military, has become Argentina's leading investigator of official corruption. Having failed in his fight to purge the virus he is now taking on the disease's symptoms.

Even the passing of generations does not heal unspoken guilt.

The Argentine military, the old SS officers, the ex-KGB agents, Rwanda's Hutu marauders, and Serb ethnic cleansers, can live with what they did. But their societies cannot.

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ELIZABETH HANLY

Cuba's Young Poets

Nearly every evening at dusk a group of young poets gathers together to talk and work in the living room of a small house built on a flat rooftop in Havana. From here you can see much of the broken filigree of what may still be the most graceful city in the world. Havana was made for pleasure, first as an R & R capital for the treasure ships of the Spanish Empire, then later as a tropical Paris during the sugar boom *delirium at the turn of the century*.

From here you can see the food lines that criss-cross the neighborhood as hunger becomes real on the island and the revolution wrestles with its claims of "socialist legality." Ordinarily at dusk everybody in Havana reaches out for one another. These days the chatter and romance continue. But that effervescence now verges on hysteria. There's talk of civil war. One of the young poets on the roof turns from the scene below. "If at this juncture," he observes, "we don't try to find out what it really means to be Cuban, we're lost."

It is another poet, who seems only a few years older than the rest, who brought this group together. It is her white-washed cottage, which she and her lover managed to build for themselves on that Havana rooftop, breaking just about all of the city's housing laws, that everybody calls home. That home has become a legend on the isle.

Perhaps not surprisingly, considering how difficult it is for American scholars and critics to travel to Cuba, let alone get past its official culture, Reina María Rodriquez is hardly a well-known figure in the United States. Those who do know her work and her rooftop, John Beverly of the University of Pittsburgh for instance, describe her as "a key figure in the emerging post-Soviet Cuba."

After nearly twenty-five years of a national literature so compromised that much important Cuban writing has been done in exile – the work of Reinaldo Arenas, for example – Reina María Rodriquez and the young poets on her rooftop may finally be turning that around. Several of this group have won important prizes in Spain and Mexico, others have been published in journals as prestigious as Octavio Paz's *Vuelta*. And now, arguably the most authentic movement in letters seen on this island in decades is forging the way for the first legally autonomous cultural association since the revolution. A small publishing imprint will be included within its mandate. Reina – nobody ever calls her anything

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else – will have broken the state's monopoly on Cuban letters.

Not even someone born to Cuban bureaucracy could have imagined the Kafkaesque circlings she's made over the last five years to bring this project so far. Its brand-new standing may well be reversed as tensions between vying political factions continue to be played out over the group's status. An internationally recognized Cuban intellectual described to me "a virtual terror on the part of hard-liners to allow any space for a civil society to grow." Yet these days, considering Cuba's economy, pragmatism is often replacing ideology.

Predictably it has been the young who have pushed the state this far. Yet it would be rather ironic if the state were to lose its hold on Cuban publishing to this group of young poets. It would be an eloquent illustration of what, in less extreme circumstances, would be theorized as art's own imperative. For curiously, the work of those gathered on Reina's roof, even the work of those who put themselves most on the line politically, very nearly ignores politics. This is a group described by one member as "most taken with ideas which abolish space and time." Theirs is a poetry after far bigger than political game. Surely that, in addition to the idea of opened flood gates, is what hard-liners have found intolerable.

"Cuba is breaking apart," the thirty-year-old poet and translator Omar Pérez tells me. "We're trying to find ground zero from which we can begin again."

After decades of socialist didactic literature, ground zero now translates into work laden with symbols and obscure philosophical references. One member of the group, Roberto Fránquiz, has nearly completed a four-hundred-fifty-page anthology of the work of his generation. (It does not matter that Fránquiz doesn't expect his work to be published soon; he is prepared for posterity.) "For all the different voices," Fránquiz says, "this is one poetry, all of it wrestling with the idea of redemption."

"The best work of young poets in Cuba today isn't dissident poetry, nor is it likely to be," says the thirty-five year-old poet and short story writer Rolando Sánchez Mejías. He should know. Until his expulsion from the party in the early 1990s, Mejías directed Cuba's extensive network of *talleres* or writing workshops, a cultural network that enjoys international recognition. Many of the island's young poets passed through these workshops. According to Sánchez Mejías, "Fear doesn't begin to explain the current direction of poetry among the young in Cuba."

Cultural repression certainly exists here. PEN estimates that as many as thirty Cuban writers have been imprisoned since the revolution –

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nearly all of them for political activities.

Castro's regime usually saved its punch for its real or imagined political and terrorist foes. The ideological deviation of writers was most often answered with the loss of employment and restrictions pertaining to travel and access to cultural networks, and most of Cuba's young poets are already plenty marginalized.

"When politics have come too close for too long," Sánchez Mejías says: "when they have encroached on the most intimate details of daily life, and even on the body itself, small wonder we have this writing which tries to shake itself free of politics."

Nearly every member of this new literary generation regards José Lezama Lima as a spiritual father. One of Latin America's literary giants, Lezama was Cuba's most enigmatic writer, the island's James Joyce. He died in 1976, scorned by the revolution for his political apathy as well as his homosexuality. He is an apt model for the poets of this generation who are searching for what Lezama, in his monumental novel *Paradiso,* called "the thickening of the ectoplasm, the bone that will endure for the Resurrection."

According to Antonio Ponte, "The task this generation has set for itself is to try to pin down an island born out of so much imagination that imagination can no longer describe, let alone contain it. That is our dilemma," he says, "and perhaps, Cuba's tragedy."

Reina María Rodriquez never intended to become the center of any group, much less the focus of the current watershed political decision. While other writers of her generation were filling cultural posts in leading institutions in Havana, Reina let officialdom go its way. She wanted time to write. Supporting herself with some radio and television work, she made that time. Reina set out to catch "the language of the intimate," those small moments which she felt were already being lost to ideology by the early 1970s.

It would take Cuban culture nearly a decade to conclude the debate on the worthiness of "the language of the intimate" fueled by her poetry. By then, Reina had left behind what Sánchez Mejías has described as her "lyrical, highly accessible verse." In his opinion, "She's been one of the very few of her generation able in her work to let go of the fiction of Cuba's brave new world and flesh out her own symbols. The strength to do so," he believes, "came from her association with the young."

One by one, the most committed and driven of the young began to congregate on Reina's rooftop. Artists and writers shower here, when there is no water at home. They study and write here when there is no electricity at home. When writers like Omar Pérez aren't able to read

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publicly anywhere else, they read on her "patio." If anyone locates some extra food, they bring it here.

In her rattan rocking chair, fast-talking Reina rocks at a clip. Small, slight, and hawk-eyed, she's given to sudden shyness. "There seem to be short bursts of poetry in Cuba," she says. "One centered around Lezama and his magazine *Origenes* in the forties and fifties. Something similar is happening now."

At dusk, taciturn, round-shouldered Rogelio Saunders is often at Reina's. Home from the war in Angola and working as a night watchman, he is fascinated by the postmodern style. His work is full of Wittgenstein. "Perhaps we are not able to see God because we can't see the light with which we see," he writes. Amelio Calderon Fornaris is here too. Short and disheveled, the librarian and science-fiction fanatic is too shy to say much in front of others, but his poetry is full of mad somersaults. "In some way I need to bite a star . . . an aleph . . . the melody which accompanies cats when they think of hunting at night . . . In some way I'll need to bite myself . . . because food hasn't been enough," he writes. Victor Fowler Calzada, a rather lordly ex-secondary school-teacher, usually turns up. One of the most privileged of the group, Fowler currently edits the occasional compilation of lectures from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Havana-based Film Institute. Erotica is what most fascinates this poet. "Bodies are only the pretext," Fowler writes. "The real drama is the unease, anxiety trying to possess it all." And silent Rito Ramón Aroche, another night watchman – his work is a Zen of love.

And there's Sánchez Mejiás, unemployed since the crown prince of the cultural establishment became regarded by several important factions as a black sheep. To support himself, Sánchez Mejiás is selling flowers in the streets of Havana. Tall and bearded, articulate as he is, the writer and educator has a stammer, sometimes so severe that it costs him to speak. More of the work of this group is dedicated to him even than to Reina. "The dignity of the world," he writes, "may consist in conserving some small bit of its ruin."

Women are here as well. Their work tends to be less abstract and philosophical, more immediate and closely observed. The group's youngest member, languid twenty-four year-old Alessandra Molina works at a municipal arts center and describes herself as a student of the Japanese writer Yukio Mishimo, without perhaps realizing how closely her mediations resemble the work of Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector. And twenty-seven year-old Damaris Calderón Pérez works occasionally with

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Cuban radio and writes with skepticism of that most Latin American of clichés – the intoxication of love – "women drunk with fear rush against the light" – but with no skepticism of a parallel intoxication of the spirit – "always at a well, I try to touch the water . . . I tell you this with all the terror of a high-wire walker."

And Reina. Once she told me "Everything in Cuba is torn between two poles. No other island may be more idealistic or more pragmatic, more romantic or more obscene, more reverent or more blasphemous." Likewise, no one in this group is more preoccupied with loneliness and demons than Reina. No one is more apocalyptic. No one is more hopeful. And in spite of herself, she's become a celebrity not only on her island but throughout Latin America and Europe. Her poems have been translated into six languages and published in over a dozen countries.

Much like politics, popular culture has also become suspect for many of these young poets. Cuba is so noisy, and their own work is silent. Cuba is full of wicked humor; much of their work is somber. Cubans are still deeply connected to one another. Yet Rogelio Saunders claims that "the world grows through loneliness."

"Many of us are more concerned with memory than popular culture," says Sánchez Mejías. "As a people we Cubans have had little respect for memory – or history. It seems we might have something to gain from developing that, no?" The language the young poets are after "rarely existed in Cuba, even before the revolution." Sánchez Mejías is referring to a "thinking language" in which poetry meets philosophy, especially metaphysics, in the tradition of Eliot, Pound, Borges, Paz, Cortázar, and of course, Lezama Lima. As Lezama once put it, referring to a character in his *Paradiso,* "He knows that a day has been assigned to him in which he will be transfixed, and he will not see the fish inside the current but the fish in the starry basket of eternity."

More than others, Antonio Ponte, a hydraulic engineer turned screenwriter, respects the island's popular culture, particularly its Afro-Cuban faith, and incorporates its contradictions in his work. He raises unease to an art, stripping Cuban spirituality to the bone. His work is so quiet than one can begin to hear the real dynamics, usually just out of reach.

For Ponte, the divine is at hand on the island. He sees Cubans as driven by energies, gods who can appear quite capricious, certainly beyond human comprehension. "Poor humankind," he writes, "trying to remain clean of mud, dry of rains." He believes that "the real tragedy of Cuba isn't so much politics or under-development. Rather, it's impossible to live with the gods so close. Cuba suffers from an over-abundance

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of religious imagination." Omar Pérez agrees, describing a Cuban compulsion "not to be different from one another but from ordinary reality." Ponte adds. "Cubans are always trying to dance with the shadow of God," or less romantically, "We're given to a kind of schizophrenia, always looking over our shoulders, trying to talk to God, or to curse him. Everything is pending in Cuba. A god or hurricane may strike at any moment. The Cuban earth holds memory for its people. The island itself knows far more than we do. It pulls at us, often giving euphoria, but never any peace at all."

"At best, many in the government are dismayed by us," says Sánchez Mejías. "They see even our apolitical writing as amounting to a critique, but they don't know how or what to do about it."

Despite the constant of political repression in Cuba the revolution wasn't always so suspicious of its poetry. "Even with their ideological skirmishes, the sixties in Cuba were a cultural Golden Age," says Omar Pérez. "All the greats were being published: Lezama, Alejo Carpentier, Virgilio Piñera, Reinaldo Arenas." Before the revolution created its string of publishing houses, the industry had been so limited that Cuban writers, even of the caliber of Lezama, often paid to publish their work themselves. "During that epoch the magazine of the Casa de las Americas" – a pan-cultural organization conceived by the revolution – "was the best that Cuba ever produced. But by the late 1960s it was all over. What had been, in the best sense of the word, a cultural revolution was finished. Some believe the revolution itself ended at that time." There are those who say undercurrents destructive to Cuba's culture were there from the start. They point to isolated cases of repression in the arts, as well as persecution of the gay community, which began as early as 1961. But unlike that of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the mix of Cuban cultural life has often contained powerful competing factions. And according to Pérez, during the 1960s cultural repression was not yet revolutionary dogma.

"And the seventies?" Pérez is unequivocal. "The seventies were the lead years." In 1971, after a four year cat-and-mouse game, the poet Herberto Padilla was jailed for over a month. No one in the Writers' Union had gone further in public criticism of what was fast becoming the "state literature" in Cuba. His poems satirized the ambience that permitted it, an ambience that had begun to permeate the island. "One step forward," he writes "and two or three backwards: but always applauding." The titles of a 1968 volume of poetry and one from 1971 spell out his position: *Out of the Game* and *Provocations*. Yet *Out of the*

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Game won the annual Writers' Union competition in 1968. And three years later, when Padilla read excerpts from the yet to be published *Provocations,* the Writers' Union audience was enthusiastic. Clearly there were those who saw Padilla's poems not as counter-revolutionary but as cautionary: welcome additions to the debate on the role of the arts within the society they hoped to create.

Two months after that reading, Padilla was arrested. Upon his release the Writer's Union presented an evening of self-confession featuring Padilla and four other writers. He spent nine more years in Cuba, largely shunned by fellow writers, and unable to publish. Finally, he was able to leave the island for the United States in 1980. Some cultural historians claim his elaborate *mea culpa* alerted the international community to what had become, at least for a time, the neo-Stalinization of Cuba. But on the island, the Padilla affair, as it came to be called, inaugurated an unprecedented period of self-censorship. Cuba has yet to recover.

During the 1970s, Virgilio Piñera and José Lezama Lima tried to go on as before, but none of their late work was published in Cuba during their lifetimes. (Both died on the island late in the decade.) A few important poets, like Eliseo Diego and Dulce María Loynaz (who in 1992, at the age of ninety, received Spain's prestigious Cervantes Award) did manage to stay on the island and away from *officialista* writings, but they were the exceptions. During this period the work of major international figures such as Borges and the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gassett were banned in Cuba. "During those years," says Sánchez Mejías, "the Ministry of Culture published and published – but what they were trying to create still fell apart."

"The 1980s were to be a return to the 1960s – that was the hype," says Omar Pérez. "Everyone was supposed to be able to publish and travel." "During most of the decade," insists Reina, "the Ministry of Culture did try to support Cuban artists." Many of the young poets agree, even if some see that support as political expediency. Indeed, the decade is full of stories of highly placed Cultural Ministry officials forced to sign on for the so-called "pajama plan" (instant retirement), after agreeing to certain readings and exhibitions. In perhaps the most notorious case, at an art opening in 1989, a young painter gave performance art a new twist by defecating on a copy of *Granma,* the Party newspaper, in the middle of his show. He was sentenced to six months in jail.

"Far more than the 1970s, the 1980s brought out the deep contradictions of the revolution," says Pérez. "The powers that be in Cuba so love talent, they're obsessed by it," says a poet who prefers to remain anonymous. "The institutions of the regime have done a great deal to

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foster it. They nurture the young – until of course the young outgrow the space the revolution intended for them to have. They start making demands; those demands are read as political; then the trouble starts. It's happened here over and over."

Pérez points to Paideia as a case in point. A de facto organization named for a Greek cultural ideal, "Paideia came together in the late 1980s as young artists of every discipline sought an alternative to official discourse," says Sánchez Mejías. Within eighteen months, most of Paideia's leaders were black-balled. Others quietly joined what was a veritable, and certainly government-sanctioned, diaspora of young artists from the isle in 1989-1990. Periodicals such as *Caimán Barbuda* (*Bearded Alligator*) and *Naranja Dulce* (*Sweet Orange*) – a magazine created by young poets Victor Fowler and Omar Pérez – which showcased the work of the young and employed several members of Paideia, were closed.

One wonders why the state ever allowed Reina's group to become so strong. "It couldn't have happened in the 1970s," says one of the young poets. "By the time the revolution swung conservative again in the late 1980s Reina's reputation was international." "For a long time the powers that be underestimated the independence of her will. She was considered a charming eccentric, good for promotion of the revolution's tolerance," added a young painter. "Besides," added another young poet, "the revolution has often shown itself astute in not harming those they regard as safety valves." And in trying to contain the chaos of the nineties, the state moves carefully – not to inflame, but to contain.

What sort of future would these poets choose for themselves? "It's hard to say," answered Antonio Ponte. "Ideas are changing too quickly." One of the group, long silent, spoke up now. "The revolution wasn't just repression," he said. "Under Fidel, those in the countryside became people instead of animals." The poet paused. "We all fought to be Ché Guevara when we played together as children. Yet the asceticism of Ché and the Party attacked the grace at the very heart of Cuba, especially the Cuba of the cities. What makes it all sadder is that the grace had been available to a substantial proportion of the population." Still the work of the majority of these young poets is full of a quiet romance with the ideals of the revolution, mid-sixties style. The feeling that something was cut short, unrealized, may well haunt Cuba in the future.

And as always, Miami looms on the horizon. One poet refers to the two groups, Cubans on the island and those in exile, as "two sets of lab rats, engaged in what was always, on both sides, too savage an experi-

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ment in economics and culture." At some point surely those two groups will meet. (Already there are exiles with blueprints for shopping malls in colonial Havana.) And what happens then, after the initial euphoria?

All this may be years away, despite the near-hysteria everywhere. For as Sánchez Mejías puts it, "We who live here have a sense of how long things take. Nothing is about to happen."

For now, Reina, who never set out to be heroic, continues her fight for autonomous culture. But the future of Reina's House of Poetry may be much less important that her open home, where the young have gathered now for so many years. And tonight, like all other nights, Reina tosses her keys from the roof to the young artists calling to her from below.

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BOOKS

The Future of Psychoanalysis

THE RISE AND CRISIS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS IN THE UNITED STATES. FREUD AND THE AMERICANS, 1917-1985. By Nathan G. Hale, Jr. Oxford University Press. $30.00.

Twenty-four years was a long time to wait for the sequel to Nathan Hale's path-breaking book, *Freud and the Americans, 1876-1917*. But the wait was worthwhile, despite the fact that in the interim experts have produced an abundance of specific and partial psychoanalytic histories, biographies of Freudians and "deviants," clever exegeses and partis pris exposés, as well as pro-Freudian statistical studies and their anti-Freudian refutations. Hale takes all of these stances into account. He does so without rancor or prejudice, summarizes the central arguments and their refutations, while never losing sight of longitudinal changes in psychoanalytic knowledge and in the social milieu. And he clarifies the dominant and forever shifting beliefs among Freudians and neo-Freudians, the debates that have grown out of technological and medical advances, and their dissemination in the popular press. Yet he does not try to inveigle the reader to believe any one explanation for psychoanalysis's staying power, for why it has remained a central preoccupation of Western culture for over a hundred years. Instead, he explains its rise and fall in popularity, as well as "the growth of psychotherapies which then proliferated independently into a variety of theoretical and practical systems." This was particularly true in America, where psychoanalysis had been accepted with open arms, first when Freud visited in 1909, and then from the 1940s to the 1960s, when psychoanalysts – who had been central in diagnosing and curing battle-worn and psychically damaged soldiers and sailors during World War II – increasingly became leaders within the psychiatric establishment.

Each of Hale's twenty chapters picks up threads from previous ones, showing, for instance, that the schisms in the major institutes (New York, Washington-Baltimore, and Boston) had their repercussions in San Francisco and Detroit; that models of theory and therapy, as well as departures from them, made for the Freudians' vehement disagreements as well as close friendships; that changes in patients' symptoms brought forth new types of diagnoses; that advances in knowledge might have influenced such diagnoses; and that interest by the popular media, all along, had its own impact (and feedback) on the psychotherapies that would gain (or lose) adherents.

Hale notes that between 1920 and 1940 some theories of libidinal

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character of gender subscribed to a mystique of the body derived from nineteenth-century theories of physiological determinism, and that the second generation of psychoanalysts, among them Wilhelm Reich and Otto Fenichel, began to concentrate more and more on the effect of a mother's personality and modes of handling her infant, and on the social determination of character. And he traces the filiation of ideas and concepts from Freud's European disciples to their analytic "sons," "daughters," and "grandchildren."

One of the first European arrivals was Franz Alexander, who established a psychosomatic institute in Chicago. By 1941, in "Expanding Applications of Psychoanalysis," he maintained that "asthmatics suffer from 'excessive, unresolved dependence' upon the mother, a deep-seated conflict between independent and dependent impulses." This diagnosis was supported, among other things, by the fact that asthma patients' dreams tended to be suffused with maternal, intrauterine symbols such as water, caves, and enclosed spaces. Other disorders, ranging from schizophrenia to psychosomatic symptoms, in the beginning were blamed on a mother's reactions to her child, and later on focused on the relations between mother and child – whether in interactional or object-relations theories.

All along, Hale introduces theoretical and methodological issues by leading up to them with lucid and substantive summaries of the underlying therapeutic assumptions, of relevant techniques, of the social setting and even class origins and personal background of each practitioner. Throughout, the reader is supplied with short vignettes about the leading psychoanalysts. But Hale does not dwell on motivations for close friendships, deep antagonisms, or sexual liaisons. Thereby, he ignores unwarranted gossip, vituperative, undocumented and *ad hominem* remarks (rather common among psychoanalysts themselves) when explaining institutional quarrels, as well as self-serving professional interests. He does not interpret the many reasons for organizational splits as contentiousness among psychoanalysts. For, however indirectly, these also furthered the wide dissemination of their ideas: "By the mid-1950s many psychiatrists felt that without psychoanalytic training they would be "second-class" specialists. Between 1948 and 1951 the resources of existing institutes were strained as they received more than 4,069 applications for training from young psychiatrist – forty-three percent of whom were rejected, mostly on psychological grounds. Seventy-eight percent of young psychiatrists in the 1950s were psychoanalyzed; and they were convinced that the major causes of mental and nervous disorders were psychological and interpersonal. Their research was being funded by a number of founda-

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tions; their earnings were high relative to other medical specialities; and they established a new style of psychodynamic practice. Altogether, psychoanalysts received much publicity for miracle cures which, in turn, offered exaggerated hopes to a population swamped by simplistic versions of psychoanalysts' feats. By the 1960s, more and more patients felt that the results of their ever-longer analyses did not measure up to expectations, and did not ensue in fundamental change in personality, deep cures, or total release from anxiety.

Margaret Mahler told me in the late 1970s that she had never expected her study of young children to find such broad appeal. She had been analyzed by Sandór Ferenczi in Budapest, worked with Alexander in Berlin, and now tried to reconstruct the subjective experiences of preverbal infants, by watching them through a two-way mirror, hoping to "strike an appropriate balance between free-flowing psychoanalytic observation and pre-fixed experimental design." So did Daniel Stern. But whereas he assumed that from birth the infant was endowed with a sense of independent self and complex capacities for reality testing, Mahler argued, in line with the "ego psychologist" Heinz Hartmann, that it was equipped "with a striking capacity for adaptation to his environment." Her research, at least partly, also was motivated by attacks on psychoanalysis that pointed out the dearth of comparative, empirical data. She was trying to counter the increasing criticisms by psychiatrists who were beginning to explore other cures – less onerous psychotherapies, drug treatment, and behavioral intervention. And she expected to prove that the Freudians could be scientific. For ever since Sidney Hook had organized a symposium in 1958, among philosophers and psychoanalysts, whether or not psychoanalysis was a science had become a central issue.

At that meeting, Adolph Grünbaum, a philosopher of science, had defended Freud against hermeneuticists who considered psychoanalysis a humanistic discipline and thus not scientific. He went on to argue that its method, because based on data derived exclusively from free association in the clinical realm, cannot be verified, and that therefore psychoanalysis had no claim on science: for its empirical evidence is flawed and tainted by the psychoanalyst's role in the psychoanalytic dyad. Hale cites countless responses and studies by psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychologists who tried to counter Grünbaum – for example David Rapaport, Merton Gill, Lester Luborsky, George Klein, and Hartwig Dahl – and who launched "analytic research projects using audio and video recordings and transcripts to establish hypotheses about what went on in successful or unsuccessful treatment." Joseph Weiss and Harold Sampson's study was especially significant, states Hale, because they

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suggested a systematic way for testing rival psychoanalytic hypotheses – by predicting clinical consequences and then getting blind raters to judge the course of each therapy.

Why does it matter whether psychoanalysis is an art instead of a science, the reader may ask. Hale documents that such a designation, in turn, determined psychoanalysis' place within the larger culture. By the early 1960s, psychoanalysis was attacked as anti-feminist, elitist, and unable to deliver mental health care to communities and clinics; deemed an "unproven luxury" for the well-to-do. Also, psychoanalysts were losing their medical identity. Moreover, by 1980, psychoanalytic explanations of neuroses no longer were accepted as insurance-reimbursable diagnoses. Dynamic therapies, combining various types of care, and which were more cost-effective, became the dominant modes of treatment.

While Grünbaum and others were producing ever-more sophisticated arguments aimed to discredit what the Europeans call "American ego psychology," other theoretical conceptions had moved to the center. For instance, Heinz Kohut, a member of the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute, who also had become dissatisfied with classical modes of treatment, held that psychoanalysis was not a science of "causes," but of "empathic-introspective immersion of the observer into the inner life of man." His self-psychology was close to Kleinian object relations theory insofar as parental behavior is subjectively perceived and experienced by the infant. Otto Kernberg, who was trained in Chile (where Klein's and Lacan's influence was strong), attributed narcissism, primarily, to borderline cases – that is, to patients suffering from chronic anxiety, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, dissociations, hypochondria, and more. These conceptualizations and accompanying therapies infused psychoanalysis with new life.

Yet ironically, the proliferation and nearly universal acceptance of psychoanalytic ideas have themselves contributed to the decline of its practice. As Hale states, the current crisis is "in part the product of too great, too embarrassing a success," and of the therapeutic optimism, especially from the 1940s to the 1960s. He has traced its complex trajectory, its innate dynamism, and its internal contradictions, most brilliantly. And he is to be commended for avoiding the now-common endless polemics and for drawing on the most meticulous references and wide-ranging data he culled from many disciplines. No wonder it took twenty-four years to complete this book.

EDITH KURZWEIL

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Beyond the Vienna Circle

THE MEANING OF LIFE. By A. J. Ayer. Charles Scribner's Sons. $19.95.
IN SEARCH OF A BETTER WORLD. By Karl Popper. Routledge. $29.95.
PURSUIT OF TRUTH. By W. V. Quine. Harvard University Press. $23.50.

Few movements in the history of philosophy have developed the intellectual magnetism and achieved the academic dominance that logical positivism did, at its zenith in the 1930s and 1940s. Even fewer have so rapidly and completely lost their place as a participant in the philosophical dialogue or sustained such a diminution of their intellectual legacy as did logical positivism in the ensuing two decades. Now, we have new volumes of thought by three of the major philosophers who were closely associated with the founding fathers of the movement, A. J. Ayer, W. V. Quine, and Karl Popper. The work of each bears witness in different fashion to the original power of the vision and the technique that characterized the rise of logical positivism and to the reasons for its death or transformation.

A. J. Ayer's book, with its ironically confessional title essay, "The Meaning of Life," was published posthumously in 1990. Ayer made his first pilgrimage to Vienna in 1934, at the suggestion of his Oxford tutor, Gilbert Ryle, and of Isaiah Berlin. He became the only British member of the Vienna Circle, the small, then relatively unknown group of mathematicians, philosophers and scientists at whose weekly seminars the main doctrines of logical positivism were developed. After his return to England, Ayer's lucid version of these doctrines sealed his reputation as the apostle of the movement.

W. V. Quine first met Ayer in 1934 when he read a paper for the Circle in Vienna, where he had come as a post-doctoral fellow after studying with Alfred North Whitehead at Harvard. He was to be the only American member of the Vienna Circle, and he soon followed Rudolf Carnap, in many ways the leading figure of logical positivism, to Prague, where he became Carnap's student, colleague, and ultimately, critic. Yet despite, or perhaps more correctly, pursuant to, his later self-declared "apostasy" toward the "dogmas" of logical positivism, Quine's philosophical method and themes remain continuous with those of the logical positivists. His recent book, *Pursuit of Truth*, represents a

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systematic effort to interpret the elements of sensory stimulation and linguistic construction that are involved in the discovery of true statements about the world.

Karl Popper, unlike Ayer and Quine, was born in Vienna and studied philosophy with many who were members of the Vienna Circle. Also unlike Ayer and Quine, he was never an apostle or follower of logical positivism but was afforded, virtually at the creation, special status as the "official opposition" of the Vienna Circle. In his latest book, *In Search of a Better World*, a collection of pieces written over the past three decades, about a third of the essays relate to the work Popper carried out in his study and confrontation of logical positivism. Another third, as the title suggests, refer to his concern with social and political change. Popper also explores his reassessment of and, in a sense, his self-definition within, the cultural heritage of earlier Viennese and European liberalism.

The appearance of these works now, some time after the main texts of the founders of logical positivism – Wittgenstein, Carnap, Schlick, Waismann, Neurath, Reichenbach, et al – have suffered a measure of eclipse, reminds us of their common context and the shared source of their philosophical development. Even as they provide sign posts for new directions in philosophy at the end of the century, they have unavoidably given us testaments of survivors who have been left to tell the tale: Ayer in a style influenced by the British empiricist tradition, from Locke through Hume and Mill to Bertrand Russell; Quine with elegant prose whose laconicism mirrors the precision and nonredundancy of a logical language; and Popper by giving us a sort of philosophical fuilleton with an air of personal authority, championing the broad legacy of the secular European Enlightenment.

Viewed from the perspective of today's cultural currents, the tale of logical positivism is the record of a doctrine whose coherence and magnetism, in the philosophical void of interwar Europe, attracted the best philosophical minds of a generation to an extreme and untraditional vision of the future of philosophy. The Nazi attack on this movement in the 1930s resulted in the exile of virtually all of its major figures. As a consequence of their relocation from Vienna, Prague, and Berlin, to Oxford, Cambridge, London, Chicago, Wellington, Ankara, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, New York, Rostov, Minneapolis, Columbus, and more remote or provincial campuses, logical positivism became, for a period, the dominant philosophical movement of the Anglo-American academy.

Yet its history reflects much more than the ebb and flow of intellectual trends in the cultural wars of our times. It was a response, as the two component terms of its hybrid name was intended to suggest, to

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two transcendent intellectual challenges. One was the need, felt since the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century, to understand and interpret the significance of the *positive sciences* for the legitimacy and the vocation of philosophy. The other was the promise, made possible by the discoveries in *logic* at the turn of the century, of a formal construction of the languages of logic, mathematics, and of the positive sciences, in order to directly exhibit their characteristics and their boundaries.

Whitehead and Russell showed the possibility of constructing mathematics as a logical language. Logic was not to be reduced to the psychological laws of human thought or hypostatized to the invariant Platonic laws of being. Logic was a language whose vocabulary and rules could be constructed, whose consistency could be proved, and whose boundaries could be demarcated. Accordingly, logical positivism was licensed for a series of affirmative enterprises and given an exclusionary wand: to construct the languages of logic, of mathematics, and by extension of the positive sciences, while avoiding the metaphysical trap of a Spinoza or a Descartes and bypassing any involvement in theology and morals. (Its distinctive focus on understanding positive science by constructing the language of science suggests an interesting analogy to the modernism of the period in art and architecture, with its stress on the elements of the language of the arts rather than their representative or moral function.)

The most dramatic conclusion of logical positivism was that statements that do not satisfy the conditions of analyticity or verifiability, that is, that cannot be expressed as either logical sentences or as empirical hypotheses, are not cognitive. Such noncognitive claims are capable of neither truth nor falsity, and in the philosophically pejorative term that was fashionable in the period, they were "meaningless." The philosophical confrontation arose when the further consequence emerged that statements in moral or ethical discourse, the formulations in a theological idiom and the traditionally philosophically paradigmatic statements of metaphysics were also lacking in any claim of truth value. The more internally subversive claim was the application to philosophy itself, rather than to ethics and theology, particularly since it was based on a more intimate knowledge of the substance of the philosophical tradition. Some of the ambitious claims of metaphysical thinkers might, in a linguistic reconstruction, have been empirical propositions within the science of their own times. Others might reduce to mere tautologies or self-contradictions. The more important insight was that many of the metaphysical claims reflected a misunderstanding of the nature and limits

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of cognitive language.

Against this background, the significance of Ayer's choice of title for his last book, *The Meaning of Life,* emerges in bold relief. Although he does not overcome here the many problems inherent in discussions about the meaning of life, his essay on the subject is the acknowledgment of a reversal of position, after so many decades in which he remained, despite some shifts to other styles of language analysis, essentially loyal to the views of the Vienna Circle. He makes use of the perennial poetic theme of *Carpe diem,* that the "meaningfulness of life" is connected with the desire to seize the fleeting moment. To this universal chorus, Ayer adds a quasi-Marxist gloss, reminding us that his express secular belief in the vision of the Labour Party and his moral certainty in anti-anti-Communism was more constant than his faith in logical positivism.

In contrast to Ayer, Karl Popper, from the outset of his own philosophical relationship with logical positivism, had been prepared to assert dissident views in politics as extensions of philosophical claims. His most noted contribution as the "official opposition" to the early Vienna Circle was in his criticism of the criterion of "verifiability," which served to draw the boundary between an empirical or scientific language and languages that are not empirical. He suggested that a more appropriate criterion would be "falsifiability." Thus, sentences could be investigated for their scientific truth, only if in principle they could admit of the possibility of being false.

For Popper, the stress on falsifiability led to the recognition of fallibilism and corrigibility in science and, thus, toward the justification of the liberal virtue of tolerance on the basis of the nature of scientific inquiry. This tendency to trace connections between epistemological questions in science or philosophy and contemporary cultural issues has been a constant in Popper's work. The most dramatic example, during his New Zealand refuge from Europe, was his criticism of the metaphysical doctrines of Platonism and Hegelianism and of Marxism as the grounds of totalitarianism, and which generated his defense of "the Open Society."

In "Toleration and Intellectual Responsibility," Popper argues that "ethical principles form the basis of science" since toleration of the views of the other, even recognition of the other as a "potential equal" in the search for truth, are prerequisites. Yet Popper's own experience does not allow him to simply hold the argument on the level of liberal pieties, for it moves him to the deeper dilemma of "toleration for the intolerant." If, on the one hand, there is no toleration for the intolerant, then it would appear that the requisite widest possible pluralism of viewpoints

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needed for the truth to emerge in the course of time is aborted. Yet, on the other hand, toleration for the intolerant can be self-defeating. Popper writes: "If we concede to intolerance the right to be tolerated, then we destroy tolerance and the constitutional state. That was the fate of the Weimar Republic."

In contrast to both Ayer's and Popper's books, the style, method and issues found in Quine's *Pursuit of Truth* appear to be continuous with the primary interests of the Vienna Circle. Yet his ongoing revision of the original positions, the breakdown of all inherited rigidities and the rigorous flexibility he pursues, demonstrate how great is the distance both logic and the analysis of the language of science have traversed through the decades. For Quine, even the formal, definitional or logical parts of a scientific language are not totally immune from revision in the light of experience. There is a difference between analytic and non-analytic statements, but it is one of degree and is context dependent. Empirical sciences develop and are verified by our ability as human beings to use the sensory stimuli of the environment as evidence for our hypotheses about the world. He asks:

> From impacts on our sensory surfaces, we in our collective and cumulative creativity down the generations have projected our systematic theory of the external world. Our system is proving successful in predicting subsequent sensory input. How have we done it?

In this tightly-packed volume, Quine goes on to clarify many issues that arise in the interpretation of the nature of scientific inquiry. In a statement which has special relevance to the theme of the rise, fall, and transformation of logical positivisim, Quine writes of science as a "language game":

> But when I cite predictions as the checkpoints of science . . . I see it as defining a particular language-game in Wittgenstein's phrase: the game of science in contrast to other good language games such as fiction and poetry. A sentence's claim to scientific status rests on what it contributes to a theory whose checkpoints are in prediction.

Quine proceeds to discuss the nature of "reference" in the language of science. He seeks to explain what kinds of things can be said to exist in a scientific theory. His most famous summary answer is the formula that "to be is to be the value of a variable." In *Pursuit of Truth,* the

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stress is on the different kinds of variables that theories of contemporary physics have invoked, so that the entities that can be said to exist include not only electrons, but quarks, particles "with no particularity," light waves that are only analogously wave-like, and any other entity which scientific theory must posit as existing in order to explain the evidence. Quine speculates on how far the language game of science may depart from the ordinary language game of everyday things. For him, who has demonstrated the indeterminacy in translating from any language to any other, it may be that technological applications of science take place despite the significant measure of nontranslatability of the language of science.

The success of science has legitimated the autonomy and, in some sense, the priority, of the scientific language game, as the arbiter of what can be said to exist in the world, in his phrase, for our ontological commitments. It does not follow, however, that this priority should be extended to adopting the analysis of the concept of "truth" that is most appropriate for science as our meaning of the term in other contexts.

In the final section of *Pursuit of Truth,* Quine extends and revises a version of the correspondence or "semantic" theory of truth, developed in the 1930s by Tarski and others of the Warsaw or Polish School of logicians, who worked in fruitful relationship with the Vienna Circle in the interwar period. He links it to contexts as diverse as Einstein's theory of relativity or "the higher reaches of set theory." Yet the question remains of the legitimacy of linguistic interpretations of "truth" as used in other contexts. There is a moral in the etymological connection between the true and the trustworthy, preceding and surviving formal logic and experimental science. Conceivably (and hopefully conceived only in dystopian science fiction), a culture which had only a scientific or correspondence concept of truth might be deficient in the moral resources needed to achieve truth in its science. It could be lacking in the capacity to develop persons who can be trusted to resist ideological or other temptations in the pursuit of truth. This is another variation of Popper's theme of the ethical basis of science.

This leads to the philosophical question of the nature and future of philosophy that has followed from the eclipse of the logical positivist vision. Ayer's concluding thesis is that all philosophers in the future will have to choose between being "pontiffs or journeymen." In progressive science, a competent journeyman, standing on the shoulders of giants, could continue the "cumulative and collective" advance of knowledge. His distaste for the philosopher as pontificator, which he identified with the metaphysical tradition as well as with named contemporaries like

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Heidegger and his type of "deeply signficiant nonsense," was abiding. Yet with his recognition of the hubris of logical positivism and his reversal of direction, Ayer provides philosophers at the *fin de siècle* with no options other than to be failed pontificators or failed journeymen.

Quine has been recognized throughout his career as a master journeyman in logic and in many ways a magician of the philosophy of language. On his own theory, philosophy is not primarily a progressive science since it cannot claim to be "successful in predicting subsequent sensory input." Yet to the degree to which it is linked with the sciences and with mathematics and logic, philosophy has a part in a progressive cognitive enterprise. In any event, many critical and scholarly activities, which lack a predictionist criterion, have shown, within set frames of reference and agreed standards, the capacity to achieve intellectual progress or convergence among their connoisseurs.

Yet this vision of philosophy is limited to a community with mastery of the techniques of modern logic and the sciences. Unlike the original logical positivists who argued that cognitive statements about moral or political problems could not be made, the philosophers of science would recognize the legitimacy of these human problems but would not have a particularly strong base from which to say much about them, other than the common sense shared, more or less, by the citizens.

Popper, who continues to believe in the importance of the philosophy of science for "academic philosophy," expresses in *In Search of a Better World* his concern for a philosophy which will confront the problems of mankind. The early Circle, including Waismann, Schlick, and Wittgenstein, was committed by its philosophical position, in Popper's account, to the "prophecy" that philosophy would wither away as its own methods of language analysis would show the traditional philosophical problems to be "meaningless" or "pseudo-problems." Popper's examples of ongoing philosophical problems are not reassuring. The role of philosophical thought as distinct from common sense in clarifying moral and political questions is not probed, and no evidence of philosophical competence in achieving true judgments about them is provided.

The actual history of the academy of the past three decades shows that the end of logical positivism marked not the closing down of professional philosophy but an opening of an academic theater of ideas. The revitalized study of Nietzsche and the revision or resurrection of Marx, or the hybrid Nietzschean Marxism; the revival of Heidegger, or the transformation of the French Heidegger from Sartre through Foucault and Derrida, are examples of the counter-response to the

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former dominance of logical positivism. It would seem that not only nature but intellectual fashion abhors a vacuum. Analogous to other arts, a self-professed austere idea of modernism has been surrounded by a self-defined postmodernist conception of inclusiveness, albeit inclusiveness with an ideological slant.

The philosophical chronology, however, does not show that logical positivism lost its place in the battlefield of ideas because of the need for a more ideological philosophy or for one with greater focus on ultimate spiritual concern. It is true that even in the period of its greatest academic dominance, the philosophical voices of phenomenologists, existentialists, and many others outside the framework of language analysis continued to resonate. Yet the significant factor was the internal subversion of logical positivism by its own protagonists, working out its own implications.

Kurt Godel was a member of the Vienna Circle who went into exile at the Princeton University Institute for Advanced Study. There he carried out his brilliant demonstrations on the requirements for consistency proofs and completeness proofs in mathematics. His results included, *contra* the vision of Whitehead and Russell, the demonstration that any proof of the completeness of mathematics as a language would inevitably generate an inconsistency.

Equally ironically, Ludwig Wittgenstein, even though he had studied with Russell before World War One and walked the streets of Vienna with Schlick and Carnap, arguing the themes of the Circle, was generally considered the lonely genius of logical positivism. He was to come to the conclusion that the theory of meaning central to the classificaion of language by logical positivism was deeply flawed. There could be no exclusionary wand to eliminate metaphysical nonsense. The meaning of any statement was its use in its language game, so meaningfulness had to be explored relative to context. Hence neither logic nor the positive sciences offered the paradigms of meaning.

It is noteworthy that the Wittgensteinian language analysis which subverted logical positivism led to classic philosophical works in the 1950s by Ryle, Austin, and Hart on concepts of mind, morals, and law. These works were ideologized after the 1960s by their philosophical critics who contend that all cultural artifacts are inevitably ideological.

The philosophical routes of Ayer, Popper, and Quione converged to a degree around Vienna, but they have each followed many roads from Vienna. To some extent, Ayer in *The Meaning of Life* was still squaring his accounts with the Vienna Circle. Karl Popper, however, has spearheaded so many controversies over the nature and implications of the

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philosophy of science that his earliest confrontations with the Vienna Circle recede as links of a continuing chain. As for Quine, his perpetual revisionary pursuit would appear to have embodied his own metaphor for logical and scientific method, namely, that of a ship that undergoes transforming repairs while constantly moving forward on an open sea.

Viewed retrospectively, Ayer, Quine, and Popper necessarily exhibit the error about the future of philosophy that was advanced by the Vienna Circle. It believed that the future would bring the end of the illusion of philosophical truth that had been sustained by the great tradition of philsophy for two-and-a-half millennia. Hastening this end would not be an act of parricide or matricide, since whatever was good in that tradition would be metamorphosed into works of science or the museum of the humanities. The logical positivists were slaying only the idols whose voices spoke in pseudo-propositions and projected conceptually incoherent ideas.

The philosophy of logical positivism itself would have to survive for a decent interval in order to demonstrate the technique and the legitimacy of this idolicide. Presumably when the temptation of philosophical idol worship had also withered away, it too would metamorphose into its less aggressive forms of logic and science.

Not for the first time in the career of philosophy, the prophecy or even the obituary of its death has been premature. Yet despite the failure of the philosophy of the Vienna Circle to carry out its goal of the displacement of philosophy, the moral of this tale from Vienna is not without some measure of solace. The Vienna Circle was born with great expectations and died with its legacy unrealizable, yet the reviews show not only birth and death but also transformation.

Neither logical positivists nor their revisionist successors, however, admitted the legitimacy of the various ideological or existential ways of philosophizing. Yet with the surrender of the positivist linguistic techniques of philosophical exorcism, all kinds of philosophical tendencies emerge.

The postmodernist works, neither fully excluded nor admitted, must appear as obscure or deconstructed specters haunting the clear house of mirrors that modernist philosophies of logic, of language analysis, and of science have constructed. Thus, the three books which bear witness to the transformation of logical positivism, to the squaring of the Vienna Circle, as it were, do not mark the end of the debate on the structure and continuity of the future mansions of philosophy.

DAVID SIDORSKY

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Geoffrey Hill

NEW AND COLLECTED POEMS, 1952-1992. By Geoffrey Hill. Houghton Mifflin. $15.95.
THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY: WORDS, CONTEXTURE, AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES OF LANGUAGE. By Geoffrey Hill. Stanford University Press. $13.95.

"It is possible," Geoffrey Hill observed in 1988 of a new, weighty Ezra Pound biography, "to be at once scrupulous, immensely industrious, and too easy on oneself." Himself scrupulous almost to a fault, minutely weighing his sentences and lines, Hill is a poet and critic formed, one might say, between the pages of the *OED,* the second edition of which he reviewed shortly after remarking on the bloated dimensions of the Poundian Life. Hill's word-measurement is both analytic and, as the *Dictionary*'s original title asserted oxymoronically, "new" because firmly grounded "on historical principles." Hill's own "immense industry" doesn't display itself quantitatively, however – the *Collected Poems* totals a little more than two hundred pages; the new book of criticism, his second, is just one hundred pages long – but rather in the range of his writing, to which *The Enemy's Country*'s forty pages of notes eloquently testify as well as one's sense that the material Hill has chosen to include itself includes, as revelatory background or contexture, all the material he's taken it upon himself to leave out.

"Contexture" is Hill's own term, recovered from Thomas Hobbes in his treatise on *Humane Nature,* written in 1650. Hobbes's use of "contexture" drifts from meaning something as Hill puts it, "close to 'circumstance' understood as 'the totality of surrounding things' to one of a set of circumstances which serve as 'material adjuncts,' the 'things belonging' to language." Hill suggests that in order to grasp Hobbes's own meaning one has to understand it as combining "an argument, a thesis which is unequivocal," with "a counter-argument, realized within the texture of his writing, which grasps that the equivocal and the ambiguous are intrinsic to human nature and civic history."

Hill's poetry – and, more discursively, his prose – is marked by an intense attention to this double movement between the unequivocal and the equivocal, policy and poetry, an attentiveness that stems from his "view that the equivocal . . . constitutes the reality of poetry's grasp upon protean matter." In *The Enemy's Country* he has produced a study,

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juxtaposing the surprisingly congenial "energies" of Pound and of Hobbes' contemporary, the poet and playwright John Dryden, that in its grasp of the complex machinery of equivocation is fully equal to the work of the great twentieth-century expositor of ambiguity and drift, the English critic and poet William Empson: not least in the extent to which Hill, like Empson, insists that poetry cannot be divorced from policy and from the "compacted doctrines" that, as Empson argues, are necessarily imposed by poems on their readers. Against Francis Bacon's claim that "Policie" is, in Hill's paraphrase, "the most 'immersed' of crafts or 'knowledges'," Hill offers "meta-poetry" such as Dryden's and Pound's – or his own and Empson's – which is "immersed in the knowledge that it is so immersed," "infused," that is, by the "practice of an uncommon alertness to the common practices of speech."

This alertness takes the form of what Hill once called, citing Blake, "the struggles of entanglement with incoherent roots," a lack of fit not only between word origins and established usage but within etymologies as well. The grammatical and syntactical aspects of such entanglement also come into play, since it is only by remaining alert to half-buried semantic incoherence that disentanglement, whether grammatical or syntactical, becomes possible. Almost twenty-five years ago Hill drew on Cardinal Newman and Simone Weil in order to distinguish "a grammar of assent" – "involving a reciprocity between imagination and action" – from the syntax which enables a passage to function simultaneously on several planes; these represent, he argues, alternative forms of "objective . . . [self-] scrutiny."

If in his own poetry Hill aspires to "a grammar that transfigure[s] syntax," he still leaves open "the way of syntax" should the grammar prove unavailable, unavailing. With regard to subject-matter, however, syntax's transfigurement – the extent to which imagination may justly be said to " 'lead on' to action" and, reciprocally, be " 'enriched and deepened' by [the] grasp of right action" – has always been his dominant theme.

Here, as an index of Hill's dexterous handling of the theme, is a cento of lines:

> There is no bloodless myth will hold;
>
> I have learned one thing: not to look down
> So much upon the damned. They, in their sphere,
> Harmonize strangely with the divine
> Love. I, in mine, celebrate the love-choir;

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As though the dead had *Finis* on their brows;

Oh my dear one, I shall grieve for you
For the rest of life with slightly
Varying cadence, oh my dear one;

Theology makes good bedside reading. Some
Who are lost covet scholastic proof,
subsistence of probation, modest balm;

Whatever strikes and maims us is not
Fate, to our knowledge. En avant, Péguy!
The irony of advancement. Say 'we
possess nothing: try to hold on to that.'

These are cited, respectively, from "Genesis" (a poem in five sections), "Ovid in the Third Reich" (of which this is the second of two quatrains), "The Imaginative Life" (in six unrhymed tercets), "The Songbook of Sebastian Arrurruz" (an eleven-poem suite), "An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England" (a sequence of thirteen sonnets), and "The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy" (a hundred quatrains in ten sections), which span the thirty years between 1952 and 1983.

Among the epigraphs to the 1985 *Collected Poems* – precursor of the present volume – Hill included the line "In the gloom, the gold gathers the light against it" from Pound's eleventh *Canto,* "last of the 'Malatesta' Cantos" although certainly not the last of Sigismondo Malatesta. In *The Enemy's Country* Hill returns to the line and to this " 'famous condottiere, military engineer, and patron of the arts', one of the great factive heroes of the *Cantos,*" who "defines himself by resistant achievement," transfiguring syntax. For Hill, Pound's line not only describes what Pound in 1915 referred to as the "intelligence at bay," but itself displays the very intelligence that Hill locates in an irreducible "ambivalence within the term 'at bay' ":

> It is both 'the chorus of barking raised by hounds in immediate conflict with a hunted animal' and the 'position of a hunted animal when, unable to flee farther, it turns, faces the hounds, and defends itself at close quarters.' The 'chorus' determines the 'position' but the creature in that position manifests its own determination and may well force that chorus back upon an urgent and surprising redefinition.

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From this complex negotiation, occurring between writer and "'stubborn language" as well as between writer and "political and economic realities of circumstance," individual style emerges: namely, in the transactions Hill thematizes in *The Enemy's Country,* whereby in "relat[ing] otium to negotium" one "obtain[s], amid the world's circumstances, that 'vacation from other busines,' the 'intervalls and ease' in which to think and write." Dryden and Pound demonstrate, "albeit [each] with varying degrees of finality," the extent to which "a poet's words and rhythms are not his utterance so much as his resistance" and the consequent obligation of style to "admit the contrary of that which it affirms."

Such are "the essential facts" for Hill. From the sentence which opens the *New and Collected Poems* – "Against the burly air I strode/ Crying the miracles of God" – to the concluding one-sentence poem,

> Memory worsening – let it go as rain
> streams of half-visible clatter of the wind
> lapsing and rising,
> that clouds the pond's green mistletoe of spawn,
> seeps among nettlebeds and rust-brown sorrel,
> perpetual ivy burrowed by weak light,
> makes carved shapes crumble: the ill-weathering stone
> salvation's troth-plight, plumed, of the elect
> ("Sorrel")

Hill has set the "carved shapes" of inherited poetic form, among them the powerful sonnet sequences which have marked the various turns of his career, against the rain's "lapsing and rising," the wind's "half-visible clatter." (Of his most recent sequence, the eight-part "De Jure Belli Ac Pacis" ['on the law of war and peace'], the present collection includes just the two first poems; the full suite – titled after the treatise by the seventeenth-century jurist Grotius which forms the basis of modern international law, and dedicated to Hans-Bernd von Haeften, one of the members of the Kreisau Circle who was hanged with other members of the resistance group after the attempted assassination of Hitler in 1944 – was not published until last year, in the British journal *Agenda.*)

Instances of factive resistance – with politics, poetry, natural history and matters of faith impinging on one another – have supplied Hill with subject-matter as well as vocabulary, rhythm and syntax for his poetry. Ever-worsening memory, in the twin senses of "deterioration of memory" and "accumulating horrors to be remembered," is somehow

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something to be cherished, along with the "self-defining, self-vindicating" miracles of language whereby sorrel, for instance, is "in some parts of Worcestershire . . . called Sorrow," as one reads in a passage cited a the head of Hill's poem. The coincidence of *sorrel* and *sorrow* is not in itself an example of poetry but rather of the "'prosaic' strength that poetry must have," the "concurrence," as Hill puts it in *The Enemy's Country,* of "tuning" (the sounding or "exact sift[ing]" of words – with "hefting" the "approximate meanings . . . that 'Men make a shift with, in the ordinary Occurrences of Life' "). "When the tuning and hefting 'concurre' we know it," Hill asserts, "it is self-evident." "To this extent" Hill adds, "we may say that Emerson is vindicated in his grand claim: 'Instantly we know whose words are loaded with life, and whose not.'"

We may know instantly – that is to say, without having to marshal arguments – yet that doesn't mean we know right away, with "the rapidity of access and communication found desirable by contemporary civilization." Emerson's "self-evidence" needs to be supplemented by Hill's measured endorsement, in remarks immediately concerned with Pound but applicable to the experience of reading his own work as well, of the virtues of slowness. The phrases cited all come from Pound:

> Slowness seems to be concomitant . . . with a certain kind of integrity of the imagination, 'full of certitude and implacable, and unswerving,' the kind that tends to be rejected by the 'compleasant,' the accommodating, as 'naive' or 'reactionary' or 'archaic' or slow on the uptake and that finds itself punished in some way, 'at bay,' set about by malice and misunderstanding, branded by its own purgatorial suffering, and yet imbued perhaps with a 'sombre reality,' perhaps with 'something which exalts the reader, making him feel that he is in contact with something arranged more finely than the commonplace.'

Hill corrects the obvious complacencies of Pound's phrasing in "Of Coming-Into-Being and Passing-Away," one of the new poems in the *New and Collected,* composed in a format that Hill has used for half-a-dozen poems since 1992 – three stanzas (occasionally two) of seven lines each, several of the lines indented, with no punctuation aside from dashes and colons – a format that, so far as I know, is his own invention although it combines features from Gerard Manley Hopkins and Emily Dickinson as well as Pound's later *Cantos.* In this poem, and amidst this company, the clichés *somber reality* and *something which exalts the reader* and *something arranged more finely than the commonplace,* each worded in a

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manner that proves too easy on the writer, are redeemed by a factive spirit, "turn[ing] at bay upon the compleasant maxims of the age," forcing them "back upon an urgent and surprising redefinition." It is in this spirit that "prodigal ever returning/ darkness," the burden of Hill's poetry,

yields nothing

finally –

but by occasion
visions of truth or dreams
as they arise –
to terms of grace
where grace has surprised us –
the unsustaining
wondrously sustained

STEPHEN MEYER

Amy Clampitt and James Merrill

A SILENCE OPENS. By Amy Clampitt. Alfred A. Knopf. $20.00.
A SCATTERING OF SALTS. By James Merrill. Alfred A. Knopf. $20.00.

We pretend that art is long to compensate for the shortness of life, but the sad truth is that at the time of a poet's death we can contemplate art's own kind of brevity. In 1994 and 1995 those who mourned the loss of Amy Clampitt and James Merrill, the silencing of voices taken for granted, also lamented the loss of poems yet unmade. While grateful for what remained behind, we could still feel stunned that more was not in the offing. Clampitt was the world's oldest younger

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poet, who managed to pack into the twelve years of her publishing career five wonderful volumes. Merrill, like Yeats, would have kept on writing, beautifully, as long as he lived.

Both Clampitt and Merrill were famous for the help they gave to younger poets. Each was at the center of a circle of admirers (sometimes overlapping ones), and was unstinting with time and advice. The personal tributes – especially on behalf of Merrill, who was a known figure longer – have been uttered and published. Ordinary fans feel a combined frustration (there will be no more parades) and eagerness to make sense of the complete works. Reading *A Silence Opens* and *A Scattering of Salts* now, we bring to bear hindsight's proverbial wisdom in order to gain partial control over the poets' art. Both volumes were composed, we can say, with death straight in view. Clampitt knew she was dying (of cancer), and Merrill had been having health problems for several years before his death of a heart attack in Tucson. Both books, however, invite us to consider more than their makers' sense of imminent extinction. They contain forms of farewell aplenty, but also new wit, energies and keen observings.

Clampitt was more focused and single-minded than Merrill; because she was a late bloomer she had to work faster and more furiously, without the leisure to have the kind of fun he had in his poems. Even her off-beat charm possesses a raging intensity, her lushness a Quaker austerity. In her poetry she comes off as a young grandmother, girlish and wise, breathlessly wondering at and soberly viewing the world's density. She made us see and hear places – New York, Maine, the Midwest, Florida, Italy, England – but *pace* her hostile critics, who found in her packed, syntactically dense, adjective-heavy rambles nothing but a self-indulgent fondness for the over-ripe and over-sweet, she had a sober moral imagination, and a strong political consciousness. "Mataoka," one of the three long poems in this book, shows that Clampitt, while pretending to write a celebratory poem (for the three hundredth anniversary of William and Mary), can take a strong but unsimplistic, anti-imperialist stand, expressing sympathy for the poor Indian princess (whom we know as Pocahuntus) who became "the mere sullied pawn/ of statecraft and testosterone" and the "chief showpiece/ of colonial bravado," and pity mixed with scorn for the English colonialists. Like any good Quaker, Clampitt is quietly subversive. At the end she reminds us of how little we know of anything, including the girl's real name. Strolling through the Virginia countryside ("earth's/ only paradise") . . .

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is to move nearer,

in imagination, to the nub,
the pulse, the ember of what she was –
no stranger, finally, to the mystery
of what we are.

"No stranger," she also implies, "*than* the mystery of what we are."

Clampitt will be remembered and prized for her language, her lush Keatsian descriptions, her push of monosyllables against mouth-filling Latinate polysyllables, of the common against the remote, the physical against the abstract, the plain against the ornate. For example, in another elegiac poem she notices the "inklings// of undoing" at the end of summer:

. . . or as the seasonal downpour
distends to a cording of thongs and sinews,
a knout of wet one gives oneself up to,
soaked through, having made one's peace with
whatever the elements can do. Or almost.
For beyond that peace is the shape of
calamity nobody is ever
ready for: on a day at the end of summer,
a car going off the road, a mangling
incendiary gasp, and for four young athletes,
without harbinger all is over.

Like Stevens, Clampitt is a poet who sends one to the dictionary; in her case, to check on the nature of specific plants and animals, or the nuances within words partially obscured by time: "spleenwort," "sirenian," "tergiversation," "alizarin," "carmine," "baldachin," "jewelweed." One relishes her combinations, always delightful, sometimes startling: "dead-end chicaneries," "fey connoisseur/ of the unlooked for," "the elfin bubble of the incorporeal," "the wizened resins of remembering," "the braken's yellowing diminishments." Even as a chronicler of loss, an aficionado of sorrows, Clampitt confers the richness of blessings. Like Keats, she cannot view stubble fields, or any landscape of deprivation, without enacting ritual verbal reparations. The very processes of birth give premonitions of death (another aspect of the book's valedictory tones) in "Green," where all is process: " . . . The relinquishing// of doing things, of being occupied/ at all, comes hard:/

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the drifting, then the lying still."

A Silence Opens begins with "Syrinx," a poem about the desire for pure vocalise, unrelieved or burdened with meaning. It ends with the experimental, unpunctuated "A Silence," stripping away from language and experience everything extraneous, even the connective tissue of punctuation. From sound to silence the pressures of language rise and fall. At the last, revelations, especially religious ones, come immediately, silently opening us to an preparing us for . . . what? an experience, an intuition, of the eternal, the transcendent, "the infinite/ love of God."

Where Clampitt was really a Quaker mystic in the guise of a sensualist, Merrill will be remembered as our century's greatest writer of epic even though he began as an aesthete. Acknowledging and deflecting his critics' charges, he once offered this partial self-deprecating portrait: "Delicious, white, refined/ Is all that I was raised to be" ("Domino," *Late Settings*), but unnourishing, sugary sweetness constituted the smallest part of his concoctions during the forty years of his writing, especially by the end, when the elegant poet of cloisonné and nacre re-made himself, a hearty new persona emerging in his "Self-Portrait in Tyvek (tm) Windbreaker": "Everyman, c'est moi, the whole world's pal." We must take this self-assessment seriously even though it is initially delivered with Merrill's typical tongue-in-cheek incredulity. I suspect that he never forgot what Keats called "the great end/ Of poesy, that it should be a friend/ To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man."

One soothing thing, among many, in *A Scattering of Salts* is the variety if tones and styles, a distillation as well as an extension of all the previous volumes. At heart Merrill was always a hale fellow, preferring the comic view of life to the tragic one, and his divine comedies are more moving for their cost to their author. Erotic loss, broken homes, testimonies to human sadness, vanity, and self-deception never defeated him. Resiliency won out. In the first part of the epic *Changing Light at Sandover,* the friendly familiar spirit Ephraim replies, as Merrill himself might, to a question put to him by the poet: "'Must everything be witty?' 'AH MY DEARS / I AM NOT LAUGHING I WILL SIMPLY NOT SHED TEARS.'"

Merrill was from first to last a poet of characters, both the letters of the alphabet which stood out in caps throughout the bulk of *Changing Light,* and the memorable *dramatis personae* who populate the epic and the shorter narratives. In the new book Merrill announces, echoing the Yeats of "Lapis Lazuli," that he sheds his tears not at *Oedipus* or *Lear* but at the concluding whirligig septets in those Rossini operas where everything comes right at last. In spite of all the regrets, farewells,

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"headlong emigrations out of life" (as he once referred to death) that fill his pages, Merrill will go down as one of the great connoisseurs of happiness. Not just because the mythology of his Dantean epic restores all losses through the cockeyed processes of rebirth and restoration cranked out in a vast universal laboratory, but more importantly because, among all the intergalactic harmonies he creates and hears, he remains perpetually hopeful even when he has every reason not to be. He says in a sweetly nostalgic poem entitled "Radio" that somewhere out there, on some frequency or other: "This long/ Ghastly morning, one station/ Has never stopped playing our song."

Hope in the face of death, or comedy in the presence of dissolution was one of the many things Merrill learned from Elizabeth Bishop (to whom he pays overdue homage in "Overdue Pilgrimage to Nova Scotia"), the poet who could claim with equal doses of certainty and grimness: "All the untidy activity continues,/ awful but cheerful" ("The Bight"). Merrill knew that he wore a mask of boredom, and then he often made fun of himself for doing it, defending himself against his own defensiveness, so to speak. Likewise, his poetic persona became happy by first feigning light-heartiness. That he thus earned his cheerfulness increases its force. But in this volume, along with maturity, resignation, a recycling of old feelings and poetic forms, comes also a grappling with final fears. He bids farewell to the childhood which he now fully acknowledges as no Proustian paradise at all: "Goodbye to childhood, than unhappy haven./ It's over, weep your fill. Let go/ Of the dead dog, the lost toy. Practice grieving / At funerals – anybody's." Bishop taught us that the art of losing isn't hard to master, even, or especially, if it looks like disaster. Having now lost Clampitt and Merrill, both masters of that art as well as Art itself, who encouraged us to share their own wonder at the things of this world, we can call both of them – each in a separate way – the world's, or "anybody's," pal.

WILLARD SPIEGELMAN

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1896 1996

Supreme Court affirms "separate but equal"

Congress debates affirmative action

It would be easy to note how race is still a—maybe even *the*—central dilemma in American culture.

A better use of this space may be a simple reminder: The men (relax, P.C. police) who founded this country, who penned the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were, first and foremost, believers in the power of ideas. In the utter, inalienable value of learning and knowledge.

They believed that ideas, and a belief in ideas, would be the glue that would hold the republic together.

For a century, Adelphi has instilled in its graduates a knowledge of ideas and their power. The theme of Adelphi's Centennial year is, in fact, a debate about the future of those ideas commonly called the Western tradition.

A tradition that has given rise to ideas that have changed the world. *All men are created equal*, for example.

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